

Republic of Letters.

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NO WORK WILL BE PUBLISHED IN THIS JOURNAL WITHOUT HAVING PREVIOUSLY RECEIVED THE SANCTION OF GENTLEMEN EMINENT IN LITERATURE.

"When peace return'd, unfelt for many a year,
And Hope, discarded flatterer, dared I appear;
I heard of my estate, how free from debt,
And of the comforts life afforded yet;
Beside that best of comforts in a life
So sad as mine—a fond and faithful wife.
My gentle mother, now a widow, made
These strong attempts to guide me or persuade.

"Much time is lost," she said, "but yet my son
May, in the race of life, have much to run;
When I am gone, thy life to thee will seem
Lonely and sad, a melancholy dream;
Get thee a wife—I will not say to love,
But one, a friend in thy distress to prove;
One who will kindly help thee to sustain
Thy spirit's burden in its hours of pain;
Say, will you marry?—I in haste replied,
'And who would be the self-devoted bride?
There is a melancholy power that reigns
Tyrant within me—who would bear his chains,
And hear them clicking every wretched hour,
With will to aid me but without the power?
But if such one were found with easy mind,
Who would not ask for raptures—I'm resign'd."

"'Tis quite enough," my gentle mother cried,
'We leave the raptures, and will find the bride.'
"There was a lady near us, quite discreet,
Whom in our visits 'twas our chance to meet,
One grave and civil, who had no desire
That men should praise her beauties or admire;
She in our walks would sometimes take my arm,
But had no foolish fluttering or alarm;
She wish'd no heart to wound, no truth to prove,
And seem'd, like me, as one estranged from love;
My mother praised her, and with so much skill,
She gave a certain bias to my will;
But calm indeed our courtship: I profess'd
A due regard—My mother did the rest;
Who soon declared that we should love, and grow
As fond a couple as the world could show;
And talk'd of boys and girls with so much glee,
That I began to wish the thing could be.

"Still when the day that soon would come was named
I felt a cold fit, and was half ashamed;
But we too far proceeded to revoke,
And had been much too serious for a joke:
I shook away the fear that man annoys,
And thought a little of the girls and boys.

"A week remain'd—for seven succeeding days
Nor man nor woman might control my ways;
For seven dear nights I might to rest retire
At my own time, and none the cause require;
For seven best days I might go in and out,
And none demand, 'Sir, what are you about?'
For one whole week I might at will discourse
On any subject, with a freeman's force.

"Thus while I thought, I utter'd, as men sing
In under-voice, reciting 'With this ring,'
That when the hour should come, I might not dread
These, or the words that follow'd, 'I thee wed.'

"Such was my state of mind, exulting now
And then depress'd—I cannot tell you how—
When a poor lady, whom her friends could send
On any message, a convenient friend,
Who had all feelings of her own overcome,
And could pronounce to any man his doom;
Whose heart indeed was marble, but whose face
Assumed the look adapted to the case;
Enter'd my room, commission'd to assuage
What was foreseen, my sorrow and my rage.

"It seem'd the lady whom I could prefer,
And could my much loved freedom lose for her,
Had bold attempts, but not successful, made,
The heart of some rich cousin to invade;
Who, half resisting, half complying, kept
A cautious distance, and the business slept.

"This prudent swain his own importance knew,
And swore to part the now affianced two:
Fill'd with insidious purpose, forth he went,
Profess'd his love, and wou'd her to consent:
'Ah! were it true!' she sigh'd; he boldly swore
His love sincere, and mine was sought no more.

"All this the witch at dreadful length reveal'd,
And begg'd me calmly to my fate to yield:
Much pains she took engagements old to state,
And hoped to hear me curse my cruel fate,
Threat'ning my luckless life; and thought it strange
In me to bear the unexpected change:
In my calm feelings she beheld disguise,
And told of some strange wildness in my eyes.

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"But there was nothing in the eye amiss,
And the heart calmly bore a stroke like this;
Not so my mother; though of gentle kind,
She could no mercy for the creature find.
'Vile plot!' she said.—'But, madam, if they plot,
And you would have revenge, disturb them not.'
'What can we do, my son?'—'Consult our case,
And do just nothing, madam, if you please.'
'What will be said?'—'We need not that discuss;
Our friends and neighbors will do that for us.'
'Do you so lightly, son, your loss sustain?'—
'Nay, my dear madam, but I count it gain.'
'The world will blame us sure, if we be still.'—
'And, if we stir, you may be sure it will.'

"Not to such loss your father had agreed.'—
'No, for my father's had been loss indeed.'
'With gracious smile my mother gave assent
And let th' affair slip by with much content.
'Some old dispute the lover meant should rise,
Some point of strife they could not compromise,
Displeased the 'squire—ho from the field withdrew,
Not quite conceal'd, not fully placed in view;
But half advancing, half retreating, kept
At his old distance, and the business slept.
'Six years had pass'd, and forty ere the six,
When Time began to play his usual tricks:
The locks once comely in a virgin's sight,
Locks of pure brown, display'd th' encroaching white;
The blood once fervid now to cool began,
And Time's strong pressure to subdue the man:
I rode or walk'd as I was wont before,
But now the bounding spirit was no more;
A moderate pace would now my body heat,
A walk of moderate length distress my feet.
I show'd my stranger-guest those hills sublime,
But said, 'the view is poor, we need not climb.'
At a friend's mansion I began to dread
The cold neat parlor, and the gay glazed bed;
At home I felt a more decided taste,
And must have all things in my order placed;
I ceased to hunt, my horses pleased me less,
My dinner more; I learn'd to play at chess;
I took my dog and gun, but saw the brute
Was disappointed that I did not shoot;
My morning walks I now could bear to lose
And bless'd the shower that gave me not to choose:
In fact I felt a languor stealing on;
The active arm, the agile hand were gone;
Small daily actions into habits grew,
And new dislike to forms and fashions new;
I loved my trees in order to dispose,
I number'd peaches, look'd how stocks arose,
Told the same story oft—in short, began to prose.

"My books were changed: I now prefer'd the truth
To the light reading of unsettled youth;
Novels grew tedious, but by choice or chance,
I still had interest in the wild romance:
There is an age, we know, when tales of love
Form the sweet pabulum our hearts approve;
Then as we read we feel, and are indeed,
We judge, th' heroic men of whom we read;
But in our after life these fancies fail,
We cannot be the heroes of the tale;
The parts that Cliffords, Mordaunts, Bevilles play
We cannot—cannot be so smart and gay.

"But all the mighty deeds and matchless powers
Of errant knights we never fancied ours,
And thus the prowess of each gifted knight
Must at all times create the same delight;
Lovelace a forward youth might hope to seem,
But Lancelot never,—that he could not dream;
Nothing reminds us in the magic page
Of old Romance, of our declining age:
If once our fancy mighty dragons slew,
This is no more than fancy now can do;
But when the heroes of a novel come,
Conquer'd and conquering to a drawing-room,
We no more feel the vanity that sees
Within ourselves what we admire in these,
And so we leave the modern tale, to fly
From realm to realm with Tristram or Sir Guy.

"Not quite a Quixotte, I could not suppose
That queens would call me to subdue their foes;
But by a voluntary weakness sway'd,
When fancy call'd, I willingly obey'd.
Such I became, and I believed my heart
Might yet be pierced by some peculiar dart
Of right heroic kind, and I could prove
Fond of some peerless nymph who dign'd to love,
Some high-soul'd virgin, who had spent her time
In studies grave, heroic, and sublime;

Who would not like me less that I had spent
Years eight and forty, just the age of Kent;
But not with Kent's discretion, for I grew
Fond of a creature whom my fancy drew;
A kind of beings who are never found
On middle-earth, but grow on fairy-ground.
'These found I not; but I had luck to find
A mortal woman of this fairy kind;
A thin, tall, upright, serious, slender maid,
Who in my own romantic regions stray'd;
From the world's glare to this sweet vale retired,
To dwell unseen, unsullied, unadmired;
In all her virgin excellence, above
The gaze of crowds, and hopes of vulgar love.

"We spoke of noble deeds in happier times,
Of glorious virtues, of debasing crimes:
Warm was the season, and the subject too,
And therefore warm in our discourse we grew.
Love made such haste, that ere a month was flown
Since first we met, he had us for his own
Riches are trifles in a hero's sight,
And lead to questionable low and unpolite;
I nothing said of money or of land,
But bent my knee, and fondly ask'd her hand;
And the dear lady, with a grace divine,
Gave it, and frankly answer'd, 'it is thine.'
'Our reading was not to romance confin'd,
But still it gave its color to the mind;
Gave to our studies something of its force,
And made profound and tender our discourse;
Our subjects all, and our religion, took
The grave and solemn spirit of our book:
And who had seen us walk, or heard us read,
Would say, 'these lovers are sublime indeed.'

"I knew not why, but when the day was named
My ardent wishes felt a little tam'd;
My mother's sickness then awak'd my grief,
And yet, to own the truth, was some relief;
It left uncertain that decisive time
That made my feelings nervous and sublime.

"Still all was kindness, and at morn and eve
I made a visit, talk'd, and took my leave:
Kind were the lady's looks, her eyes were bright,
And swam, I thought, in exquisite delight;
A lovely red suffused the virgin cheek,
And spoke more plainly than the tongue could speak;
Plainly all seem'd to promise love and joy,
Nor fear'd we ought that might our bliss destroy.

"Engaged by business, I one morn delay'd
My usual call on the accomplish'd maid;
But soon that small impediment removed,
I paid the visit that decisive proved;
For the fair lady had, with grieving heart,
So I believed, retired to sigh apart:
I saw her friend, and begg'd her to entreat
My gentle nymph her sighing swain to meet.

"The gossip gone—What demon, in his spite
To love and man, could my frail mind excite,
And lead me curious on, against all sense of right?
There met my eye, unclosed, a closet's door—
Shame! how could I the secrets there explore?
Pride, honor, friendship, love, condemn'd the deed,
And yet, in spite of all, I could proceed:
I went, I saw—Shall I describe the hoard
Of precious worth in seal'd deposits stored
Of sparkling hues? Enough—enough is told,
'Tis not for man such mysteries to unfold.

"Thus far I dare—Where'er those orbits swam
In that blue liquid that restrain'd their flame,
As showers the sunbeams—when the crimson glow
Of the red rose o'erspread those cheeks of snow,
I saw, but not the cause—'twas not the red
Of transient blush that o'er her face was spread;
'Twas not the lighter red, that partly streaks
The Catherine pear, that brighten'd o'er her cheeks,
Nor scarlet blush of shame—but such disclose
The velvet petals of the Austrian rose
When first unfolded, warm the glowing hue,
Nor cold as rouge, but deep'ning on the view:
Such were those cheeks—the causes unexplored
Were now detected in that secret hoard;
And ever to that rich recess would turn
My mind, and cause for such effect discern.
Such was my fortune, O! my friends, and such
The end of lofty hopes that grasp'd too much.
This was, indeed, a trying time in life,
I lost at once a mother and a wife;
Yet compensation came in time for these,
And what I lost in joy, I gain'd in ease."
'But,' said the 'Squire, 'did thus your courtship cease?
Resign'd your mistress her betroth'd in peace?'

"Yes; and had sense her feelings to restrain,
Nor ask'd me once my conduct to explain;
But me she saw those swimming eyes explore,
And explanation she required no more:
Friend to the last, I left her with regret—
Nay, leave her not, for we are neighbors yet.

"These views extinct, I travel'd, not with taste,
But so that time ran wickedly to waste;
I penn'd some notes, and might a book have made,
But I had no connection with the trade;
Bridges and churches, towers and halls, I saw,
Maids and Madonnas, and could sketch and draw:
Yes, I had made a book, but that my pride
In the not making was more gratified.

"There was one feeling upon foreign ground,
That more distressing than the rest was found;
That though with joy I should my country see,
There none had pleasure in expecting me.

"I now was sixty, but could walk and eat;
My food was pleasant, and my slumbers sweet;
But what could urge me at a day so late
To think of women?—my unlucky fate.

It was not sudden; I had no alarms,
But was attack'd when resting on my arms;
Like the poor soldier; when the battle raged
The man escaped, though twice or thrice engaged,
But then it ended, in a quiet spot
He fell the victim of a random shot.

"With my good friend, the vicar, oft I spent
The evening hours in quiet, as I meant;
He was a friend in whom, although untried
By ought severe, I found I could confide;
A pleasant, sturdy disputant was he,
Who had a daughter—the Fates decree,
To prove how weak is man—poor yielding man, like me.

"Time after time the maid went out and in,
Ere love was yet beginning to begin;
The first awakening proof, the early doubt,
Rose from observing she went in and out.
My friend, though careless, seem'd my mind to explore,
'Why do you look so often at the door?'
I then was cautious, but it did no good,
For she, at least, my meanings understood;
But to the Vicar nothing she convey'd
Of what she thought—she did not feel afraid.

"I must confess, this creature in her mind
Nor face had beauty that a man would blind;
No poet of her matchless charms would write,
Yet sober praise they fairly would excite:
She was a creature form'd man's heart to make
Serenely happy, not to pierce and shake;
If she were tried for breaking human hearts
Men would acquit her—she had not the arts;
Yet without art, at first without design,
She soon became the arbitress of mine;
Without pretensions—nay, without pretence,
But by a native strange intelligence
Women possess when they behold a man
Whom they can tease, and are assured they can;
Then 'tis their soul's delight and pride to reign
O'er the fond slave, to give him ease or pain,
And stretch and loose by turns the weighty viewless chain.

"Though much she knew, yet nothing could she prove;
I had not yet confess'd the crime of love;
But in an hour when guardian-angels sleep,
I fail'd the secret of my soul to keep;
And then I saw the triumph in those eyes
That spoke—'Ay, now you are indeed my prize.'
I almost thought I saw compassion, too,
For all the cruel things she meant to do.
Well I can call to mind the managed air
That gave no comfort, that brought no despair,
That in a dubious balance held the mind,
To each side turning, never much inclined.

"She spoke with kindness—thought the honor high,
And knew not how to give a fit reply;
She could not, would not, dared not, must not deem
Such language proof of ought but my esteem;
It made her proud—she never could forget
My partial thoughts,—she felt her much in debt:
She who had never in her life indulged
The thought of hearing what I now divulged,
I who had seen so many and so much,—
It was an honor—she would deem it such:
Our different years, indeed, would put an end
To other views, but still her father's friend
To her, she humbly hoped, would his regard extend.
Thus saying nothing, all she meant to say,
She play'd the part the sex delights to play;
Now by some act of kindness giving scope
To the new workings of excited hope,
Then by an air of something like disdain,
But scarcely seen repelling it again;
Then for a season, neither cold nor kind,
She kept a sort of balance in the mind,
And as his pole a dancer on the rope,
The equal poise on both sides kept me up.

"It is not strange that man can fairly view
Pursuits like this, and yet his point pursue?
While he the folly fairly will confess,
And even feel the danger of success?
But so it is, and nought the Circe care
How ill their victims with their poison fare,

When thus they trifle, and with quiet soul
Mix their ingredients in the maddening bowl.
Their high regard, the softness of their air,
The pitying grief that saddens at a prayer,
Their grave petitions for the peace of mind
That they determine you shall never find,
And all their vain amazement that a man
Like you should love—they wonder how you can.
For months the idler play'd her wicked part,
Then fairly gave the secret of her heart.

"She hoped—I now the smiling gipsy view—
'Her father's friend would be her lover's too,
Young Henry Gale'—But why delay so long?—
She could not tell—she fear'd it might be wrong,
'But I was good'—I knew not, I was weak,
And spoke as love directed me to speak.

"When in my arms their boy and girl I take,
I feel a fondness for the mother's sake;
But though the dears some softening thoughts excite,
I have no wishes for the father's right.

"Now all is quiet, and the mind sustains
Its proper comforts, its befitting pains;
The heart reposes; it has had its share
Of love, as much as it could fairly bear,
And what is left in life, that now demands its care?
For O! my friends, if this were all indeed,
Could we believe that nothing would succeed;
If all were but this daily dose of life,
Without a care or comfort, child or wife;
These walks for health with nothing more in view,
This doing nothing, and with labor too;
This frequent asking when 'tis time to dine,
This daily dosing o'er news and wine;
This age's riddle, when each day appears
So very long, so very short the years;
If this were all—but let me not suppose—
What then were life! whose virtues, trials, woes,
Would sleep th' eternal sleep, and there the scene would close.

"This cannot be—but why has Time a pace
That seems unequal in our mortal race?
Quick is that pace in early life, but slow,
Tedious and heavy, as we older grow;
But yet, though slow, the movements are alike,
And with no force upon the memory strike,
And therefore tedious as we find them all,
They leave us nothing we in view recall;
But days that we so dull and heavy knew
Are now as moments passing in review,
And hence arises ancient men's report,
That days are tedious, and yet years are short."

BOOK XI.

THE MAID'S STORY.

A Mother's Advice—Trials for a young Lady—Ancient Lore—The Mother a Wife—Grandmother's Gentle Economy—Frederick, a young Collegian—Grandmother dies—Retreat with Biddy—Comforts of the Poor—Return home—Death of the Husband—Nervous Disorders—Conversation—Frederick a Teacher—Retreat to Sidmouth—Self-examination—The Mother dies—Frederick a Soldier—Retirement with a Friend—His Happiness how interrupted—Frederick an Actor—Is dismissed and supported—A last Adventure.

THREE days remain'd their friend, and then again
The Brothers left, themselves to entertain;
When spake the younger—"It would please me well
To hear thy spinster-friend her story tell;
And our attention would be nobly paid
Thus to compare the Bachelor and Maid."

"Frank as she is," replied the 'Squire, "nor one
Is more disposed to show what she has done
With time, or time with her; yet all her care
And every trial she might not declare
To one a stranger; but to me, her friend,
She has the story of those trials penn'd;
These shalt thou hear, for well the maid I know,
And will her efforts and her conquests show.
Jacques is abroad, and we alone shall dine,
And then to give this lady's tale be mine;
Thou wilt attend to this good spinster's life,
And grieve and wonder she is not a wife;
But if we judge by either words or looks,
Her mode of life, her morals, or her books,
Her pure devotion, unaffected sense,
Her placid air, her mild benevolence,
Her gay good humor, and her manners free,
She is as happy as a maid can be;
If as a wife, I know not, and decline
Question like this, till I can judge of thine."

Then from a secret hoard drew forth the 'Squire
His tale, and said, "Attention I require—
My verse you may condemn, my theme you must admire."

I to your kindness speak, let that prevail,
And of my frailty judge as beings frail.—
My father dying, to my mother left
An infant charge, of all things else bereft;
Poor, but experienced in the world, she knew
What others did, and judged what she could do;
Beauty she justly weigh'd, was never blind
To her own interest, and she read mankind;
She view'd my person with approving glance,
And judged the way my fortune to advance;
Taught me betimes that person to improve,
And make a lawful merchandize of love;

Bade me my temper in subjection keep,
And not permit my vigilance to sleep;
I was not one, a miss, who might presume
Now to be crazed by mirth, now sunk in gloom;
Nor to be fretful, vaporous, or give way
To spleen and anger, as the wealthy may;
But I must please, and all I felt of pride,
Contempt, and hatred, I must cast aside.

"Have not one friend," my mother cried, "not one;
That bane of our romantic triflers shun;
Suppose her true, can she afford you aid?
Suppose her false, your purpose is betray'd;
And then in dubious points, and matters nice,
How can you profit by a child's advice?
While you are writing on from post to post,
Your hear is over, and a man is lost;
Girls of their hearts are scribbling; their desires,
And what the folly of the heart requires,
Duples to their dreams—but I the truth impart,
You cannot, child, afford to have a heart;
Think nothing of it; to yourself be true,
And keep life's first great business in your view;—
Take it, dear Martha, for a useful rule,
She who is poor is ugly or a fool;
Or, worse than either, has a bosom fill'd
With soft emotions, and with raptures thrill'd.

"Read not too much, nor write in verse or prose,
For then you make the dull and foolish foes;
Yet those who do, deride not nor condemn,
It is not safe to raise up foes in them;
For though they harm you not, as blockheads do,
There is some malice in the scribbling crew."

Such her advice; full hard with her had dealt
The world, and she the usage keenly felt.
"Keep your good name," she said, "and that to keep
You must not suffer vigilance to sleep:
Some have, perhaps, the name of chaste retain'd,
When nought of chastity itself remain'd;
But there is danger—few have means to blind
The keen-eyed world, and none to make it kind.

"And one thing more—to free yourselves from foe
Never a secret to your friend disclose;
Secrets with girls, like loaded guns with boys,
Are never valued till they make a noise;
To show how trusted, they their power display;
To show how worthy, they the trust betray;
Like pence in children's pockets secrets lie
In female bosoms—they must burn or fly.

"Let not your heart be soften'd; if it be,
Let not the man his softening influence see;
For the most fond will sometimes tyrants prove,
And wound the bosom where they trace the love.
But to your fortune look, on that depend
For your life's comfort, comforts that attend
On wealth alone—wealth gone, they have their end."

Such were my mother's cares to mend my lot,
And such her pupil; they succeeded not.

It was conceived the person I had then
Might lead to serious thoughts some wealthy men,
Who having none their purpose to oppose
Would soon be won their wishes to disclose;
My mother thought I was the very child
By whom the old and amorous are beguiled;
So mildly gay, so ignorantly fair,
And pure, no doubt, as sleeping infants are:
Then I had lessons how to look and move,
And, I repeat, make merchandize of love.
Thrice it was tried if one so young could bring
Old wary men to buy the binding ring;
And on the taper finger, to whose tip
The fond old swain would press his withering lip,
Place the strong charm;—and one would win my heart
By re-assuming youth—a trying part;
Girls, he supposed, all knew the young were bold,
And he would show that spirit in the old;
In boys they loved to hear the rattling tongue,
And he would talk as idly as the young;
He knew the vices our Lotharios boast,
And he would show of every vice the ghost,
The evil's self, without disguise or dress,
Vice in its own pure native ugliness;
Not as the drunkenness of slaves to prove
Vice hateful, but that seeing, I might love.
He drove me out, and I was pleased to see
Care of himself, it served as care for me;
For he would tell me, that he should not spare
Man, horse, or carriage, if I were not there:
Provoked at last, my malice I obey'd,
And smiling said, "Sir, I am not afraid."
This check'd his spirit; but he said, "Could you
Have charge so rich, you would be careful too."

And he, indeed, so very slowly drove,
That we dismiss'd the over-cautious love.

My next admirer was of equal age,
And wish'd the child's affection to engage,
And keep the fluttering bird a victim in his cage:
He had no portion of his rival's glee,
But gravely praised the gravity in me;
Religious, moral, both in word and deed,
But warmly disputations in his creed:
Wild in his younger time, as we were told,
And therefore like a penitent when old.

Strange! he should wish a lively girl to look
Upon the methods his repentance took.

Then he would say, he was no more a rake
To squander money for his passions' sake;
Yet, upon proper terms, as man discreet,
He with my mother was disposed to treat,
To whom he told, "the price of beauty fell
In every market, and but few could sell;
That trade in India, once alive and brisk,
Was over done, and scarcely worth the risk."
Then stoop'd to speak of board, and what for life
A wife would cost—if he should take a wife.
Hardly he bargain'd, and so much desired,
That we demurr'd; and he, displeased, retired.

And now I hoped to rest, nor act again
The paltry part for which I felt disdain,
When a third lover came within our view,
And somewhat differing from the former two;
He had been much abroad, and he had seen
The world's weak side, and read the hearts of men;
But all, it seem'd, this study could produce,
Was food for spleen, derision, and abuse;
He level'd all, as one who had intent
To clear the vile and spot the innocent;
He prais'd my sense, and said I ought to be
From girl's restraint and nursery maxims free;
He prais'd my mother; but he judg'd her wrong
To keep us from th' admiring world so long;
He prais'd himself; and then his vices named,
And call'd them follies, and was not ashamed.
He more than hinted that the lessons taught
By priests were all with superstition fraught;
And I must think them for the crowd design'd,
Not to alarm the free and liberal mind.

Wisdom with him was virtue. They were wrong
And weak, he said, who went not with the throng;
Man must his passions order and restrain
In all that gives his fellow-subjects pain;
But yet of guilt he would in pity speak,
And as he judg'd, the wicked were the weak.

Such was the lover of a simple maid,
Who seem'd to call his logic to his aid,
And to mean something: I will not pretend
To judge the purpose of my reasoning friend,
Who was dismiss'd, in quiet to complain
That so much labor was bestow'd in vain.

And now my mother seem'd disposed to try
A life of reason and tranquillity;
Ere this, her health and spirits were the best,
Hers the day's trifling, and the nightly rest;
But something new was in her mind instill'd;
Unquiet thoughts the matron bosom fill'd;
For five and forty peaceful years she bore
Her placid looks, and dress becoming wore;
She could a compliment with pleasure take,
But no absurd impression could it make.
Now were her nerves disorder'd; she was weak,
And must the help of a physician seek;
A Scotch physician, who had just begun
To settle near us, quite a graceful man,
And very clever, with a soft address,
That would his meaning tenderly express.

Sick as my mother seem'd, when he inquired
If she was ill, he found her well attired;
She purchased wares so showy and so fine,
The vendors all believ'd th' indulgence mine:—
But I, who thrice was woo'd, had lovers three,
Must now again a very infant be;
While the good lady, twenty years a wife,
Was to decide the color of his life:
And she decided. She was wont t' appear
To these unequal marriages severe;
Her thoughts of such with energy she told,
And was repulsive, dignified, and cold;
But now like monarchs weary of a throne,
She would no longer reign—at least alone.

She gave her pulse, and with a manner sweet,
Wish'd him to feel how kindly they could beat;
And 'tis a thing quite wonderful to tell
How soon he understood them, and how well.

Now when she married, I from home was sent,
With grandmamma to keep perpetual Lent;
For she would take me on conditions cheap,
For what we scarcely could a parrot keep:
A trifle added to the daily fare
Would feed a maiden who must learn to spare.

With grandmamma I lived in perfect ease;
Consent to starve, and I was sure to please.
Full well I knew the painful shifts we made
Expenses all to lessen or evade,
And tradesmen's flinty hearts to soften and persuade.

Poor grandmamma among the gentry dwelt
Of a small town, and all the honor felt;
Shrinking from all approaches to disgrace
That might be marked in so genteel a place;
Where every daily deed, as soon as done,
Ran through the town as fast as it could run:—
At dinners what appear'd—at cards who lost or won.

Our good appearance through the town was known,
Hunger and thirst were matters of our own;
And you would judge that she in scandal dealt
Who told on what we fed, or how we felt.

We had a little maid, some four feet high,
Who was employ'd our household stores to buy;
For she would weary every man in trade,
And tease t' assent whom she could not persuade.

Methinks I see her, with her pigmy light,
Precede her mistress in a moonless night;
From the small lantern throwing through the street
The dimm'd effulgence at her lady's feet;
What time she went to prove her well-known skill
With rival friends at their beloved quadrille.

"And how's your pain?" inquired the gentle maid,
For that was asking if with luck she play'd;
And this she answer'd as the cards decreed,
"O Biddy! ask not—very bad indeed!"
Or in more cheerful tone from spirit light,
"Why, thank you, Biddy, pretty well to-night."

The good old lady often thought me vain,
And of my dress would tenderly complain;
But liked my taste in food of every kind,
As from all grossness, like her own, refined:
Yet when she hinted that on herbs and bread
Girls of my age and spirit should be fed,
Whate'er my age had borne, my flesh and blood,
Spirit and strength, the interdict withstood;
But though I might the frugal soul offend
Of the good matron, now my only friend,
And though her purse suggested rules so strict,
Her love could not the punishment inflict:
She sometimes watch'd the morsel with a frown,
And sigh'd to see, but let it still go down.

Our butcher's bill, to me a monstrous sum,
Was such, that summon'd, he forbore to come:
Proud man was he, and when the bill was paid,
He put the money in his bag and play'd,
Jerking it up, and catching it again,
And positing in his hand in pure disdain;
While the good lady, awed by man so proud
And yet disposed to have her claims allow'd,
Balanced between humility and pride,
Stood a full'n empress at the butcher's side,
Praising his meat as delicate and nice—
"Yes, madam, yes: if people pay the price."

So lived the lady, and so murmur'd I,
In all the grief of pride and poverty:
Twice in the year there came a note to tell
How well mamma, who hoped the child was well;
It was not then a pleasure to be styl'd,
By a mamma of such experience, Child!
But I suppress'd the feelings of my pride,
Or other feelings set them all aside.

There was a youth from college, just the one
I judg'd mamma would value as a son;
He was to me good, handsome, learn'd, genteel,
I cannot now what then I thought reveal;
But, in a word, he was the very youth
Who told me what I judg'd the very truth,
That love like his and charms like mine agreed,
For all description they must both exceed:
Yet scarcely can I throw a smile on things
So painful, but that time his comfort brings,
Or rather throws oblivion on the mind,
For we are more forgetful than resigned.

We both were young, had heard of love and read,
And could see nothing in the thing to dread,
But like a simple pair our time employ'd
In pleasant views to be in time enjoyed;
When Frederick came the kind old lady smiled
To see the youth so taken with her child;
A nice young man, who came with unsold feet
In her best room, and neither drank nor eat:
Alas! he planted in a vacant breast
The hopes and fears that robb'd it of its rest.

All now appear'd so right, so fair, so just,
We surely might the lovely prospect trust;
Alas! poor Frederick and his charmer found
That they were standing on fallacious ground:
All that the father of the youth could do
Was done—and now he must himself pursue
Success in life; and, honest truth to state,
He was not fitted for a candidate:

I, too, had nothing in this world below,
Save what a Scotch physician could bestow,
Who for a pittance took my mother's hand,
And if disposed, what had they to command?
But these were after fears, nor came t' annoy
The tender children in their dreams of joy;
Who talk'd of glebe and garden, tithe and rent,
And how a fancied income should be spent;
What friends, what social parties we should see,
And live with what genteel economy;

In fact, we gave our hearts as children give,
And thought of living as our neighbors live.
Now when assured ourselves that all was well,
'Twas right our friends of these designs to tell;
For this we parted.—Grandmamma, amazed,
Upon her child with fond compassion gaz'd;
Then pious tears appear'd, but not a word
In aid of weeping till she cried, "Good Lord!"
She then, with hurried motion sought the stairs,
And calling Biddy, bade her come to prayers.

Yet the good lady early in her life
Was call'd to vow the duties of a wife;
She sought the altar by her friend's advice,
No free-will offering, but a sacrifice:

But here a forward girl and eager boy
Dared talk of life, and turn their heads with joy.

To my mamma I wrote in just the way
I felt, and said what dreaming lasses say;
How handsome Frederick was, by all confess'd,
How well he looked, how very well he dress'd;
With learning much, that would for both provide,
His mother's darling, and his father's pride;
And then he loves me more than mind can guess,
Than heart conceive, or eloquence express.

No letter came a doubtful mind to ease,
And, what was worse, no Frederick came to please;
To college gone—so thought our little maid—
But not to see me! I was much afraid;
I walk'd the garden round, and deeply sigh'd,
When grandmamma grew faint!—and dropt, and died:
A fate so awful and so sudden drove
All else away, and half extinguish'd love.

Strange people came; they search'd the house around,
And, vulgar wretches! sold whate'er they found:
The secret hoards that in the drawers were kept,
The silver toys that with the tokens slept,
The precious beads, the corals with their bells,
That laid secure, lock'd up in secret cells,
The costly silk, the tawny, the brocade,
The very garment for the wedding made,
Were brought to sale, with many a jest thereon!
"Going—a bridal dress—for—Going!—Gone."
That ring, dear pledge of early love and true,
That to the wedded finger almost grew,
Was sold for six and ten-pence to a Jew!

Great was the fancied worth; but ah! how small
The sum thus made, and yet how valued all!
But all that to the shameful service went,
Just paid the bills, the burial, and the rent;
And I and Biddy, poor deserted maids!
Were turn'd adrift to seek for other aids.

Now left by all the world, as I believed,
I wonder'd much that I so little grieved;
Yet I was frighten'd at the painful view
Of shiftless want, and saw not what to do:
In times like this the poor have little dread,
They can but work, and they shall then be fed;
And Biddy cheer'd me with such thoughts as this,
"You'll find the poor have their enjoyments, Miss!"
Indeed I saw, for Biddy took me home
To a forsaken hovel's cold and gloom;
And while my tears in piteous flow were shed,
With her own hands she plac'd her proper bed,
Reserved for need—A fire was quickly made,
And food, the purchase for the day, display'd:
She let in air to make the damp retire,
Then plac'd her sad companion at her fire;
She then began her wonted peace to feel,
She bought her wool, and sought her favourite wheel,
That as she turn'd, she sang with sober gleam,
"Begone, dull Care! I'll have no more with thee!"
Then turn'd to me, and bade me weep no more,
But try and taste the pleasures of the poor.

When dinner came, on table brown and bare
Were plac'd the humblest forms of earthen ware,
With one blue dish, on which our food was plac'd,
For appetite provided, not for taste:
I look'd disgust'd, having lately seen
All so minutely delicate and clean;
Yet, as I ate, I found to my surprise
A vulgar kind of inclination rise,
And near my humble friend, and nearer drew,
Tried the strange food, and was partaker too.

I walk'd at eve, but not where I was seen,
And thought with sorrow, what can Frederick mean?
I must not write, I said, for I am poor;
And then I wept till I could weep no more.

Kind-hearted Biddy tried my griefs to heal,
"This is a nothing to what others feel;
Life has a thousand sorrows worse than this,
A lover lost is not a fortune, Miss!
One goes, another comes, and which is best
There is no telling—set your heart at rest."

At night we pray'd—I dare not say a word
Of our devotion, it was so absurd;
And very pious upon Biddy's part,
But mine were all effusions of the heart;
While she her angels call'd their peace to shed,
And bless the corners of our little bed.
All was a dream! I said, is this indeed
To be my life? and thus to lodge and feed.
To pay for what I have, and work for what I need?
Must I be poor? and Frederick, if we meet,
Would not so much as know me in the street?
Or, as he walk'd with ladies, he would try
To be engaged as we were passing by—
And then I wept to think that I should grow
Like them to whom would be ashamed to know.

On the third day, while striving with my fate,
And hearing Biddy all its comforts state,
Talking of all her neighbors, all her schemes,
Her stories, merry jests, and warning dreams;
With tales of mirth and murder! O! the nights
Past, said the maiden, in such dear delights,
And I was thinking, can the time arrive
When I shall thus be humbled, and survive?—
Then I beheld a horse and handsome gig,
With the good air, tall form, and comely wig

Of Doctor Mackey—I in fear began
To say, Good heaven, preserve me from the man!
But fears ill reason,—heaven to such a mind
Had lent a heart compassionate and kind.

From him I learnt that one had call'd to know
What with my hand my parents could bestow;
And when he learn'd the truth, in high disdain
He told my fate, and home return'd again.

"Nay, be not grieved, my lovely girl; but few
Wed the first love, however kind and true;
Something there comes to break the strongest vow,
Or mine had been my gentle Mattie now.

When the good lady died—but let me leave
All gloomy subjects—'tis not good to grieve."
Thus the kind Scotchman soothed me: he sustain'd
A father's part, and my submission gain'd:
Then my affection; and he often told
My sterner parent that her heart was cold:
He grew in honor—he obtain'd a name—
And now a favorite with the place became:
To me most gentle, he would condescend
To read and reason, be the guide and friend;
He taught me knowledge of the wholesome kind,
And filled with many a useful truth my mind:
Life's common burden daily lighter grew;
And even Frederick lessen'd in my view:
Cold and repulsive as he once appear'd,
He was by every generous act endear'd;
And, above all, that he with ardor fill'd
My soul for truth—a love by him instill'd;
Till my mamma grew jealous of a maid
To whom a husband such attention paid:
Not grossly jealous; but it gave her pain,
And she observed, "He made her daughter vain;
And what his help to one who must not look
To gain her bread by poring on a book?"

This was distress; but this, and all beside,
Was lost in grief—my kinder parent died,
When praised and loved, when joy and health he gave,
He sank lamented to an early grave:
Then love and woe—the parent and the child,
Lost in one grief, allied and reconciled.

Yet soon a will, that left me half his worth,
To the same spirit gave a second birth:
But 'twas a mother's spleen; and she indeed
Was sick, and sad, and had of comfort need;
I watch'd the way her anxious spirit took,
And often found her musing o'er a book;
She changed her dress, her church, her priest, her prayer,
Joined a new sect, and sought her comforts there;
Some strange coarse people came, and were so free
In their addresses, they offended me;
But my mamma threw all her pride away—
More humble she as more assuming they.

"And what," they said, as having power, "are now
The inward conflicts? do you strive? and how?"
Themselves confessing thoughts so new and wild,
I thought them like the visions of a child.

"Could we," they ask, "our best good deeds condemn?
And did we long to touch the garment's hem?
And was it so with us? for so it was with them."

A younger few assumed a softer part,
And tried to shake the fortress of my heart;
To this my plant mother lent her aid,
And wish'd the winning of her erring maid:
I was constrain'd her female friends to hear;
But suffer'd not a bearded convert near:
Though more than one attempted, with their whine,
And "Sister! sister! how that heart of thine?"
But this was freedom I for ever check'd:
Mine was a heart no brother could affect.

But, "would I hear the preacher, and receive
The dropping dew of his discourse at eve?
The soft, sweet words?" I gave two precious hours
To hear of gifts and graces, helps and powers:
When a pale youth, who should dismiss the flock,
Gave to my bosom an electric shock.

While in that act he look'd upon my face
As one in that all-equalizing place:
Nor, though he sought me, would he lay aside
Their cold, dead freedom, or their dull, sad pride.

Of his conversion he with triumph spoke,
Before he orders from a bishop took:
Then how his father's anger he had braved;
And, safe himself, his erring neighbors saved.
Me he rejoiced a sister to behold
Among the members of his favorite fold;
He had not sought me, the availing call
Demand'd all his love, and had it all;

But, now thus met, it must be heaven's design.
Indeed! I thought, it never shall be mine:
Yes, we must wed. He was not rich; and I
Had of the earthly good a mean supply;
But it sufficed. Of his conversion then
He told, and labors in converting men;
For he was chosen all their bands among—
Another Daniel! honor'd, though so young.

He called me sister: show'd me that he knew
What I possess'd; and told what it would do;
My looks, I judge, express'd my full disdain;
But it was given to the man in vain:
They preach till they are proud, and pride disturbs the brain.

Is this the youth once timid, mild, polite?
How odious now, and sick'ning to the sight!

Proud that he sees, and yet so truly blind,
With all this blight and mildew on the mind!
Amazed, the solemn creature heard me vow
That I was not disposed to take him now.

"Then, art thou changed, fair maiden? changed thy heart?"
I answered, "No; but I perceive thou art."
Still was my mother sad, her nerves relax'd,
And our small income for advice was tax'd;
When I, who long'd for change and freedom, cried,
Let sea and Sidmouth's balmy air be tried;
And so they were, and every neighboring scene,
That make the bosom, like the clime, serene;
Yet were her teachers loth to yield assent;
And not without the warning voice we went;
And there was secret counsel all unknown
To me—but I had counsel of my own.

And now there pass'd a portion of my time
In ease delicious, and in joy sublime—
With friends endear'd by kindness—with delight,—
In all that could the feeling mind excite,
Or please, or excite; Walks in every place
Where we could pleasure find and beauty trace,
Our views at night, where on the rocky steep
Shines the full moon, or glitters on the deep.

Yes, they were happy days; but they are fled
All now are parted—part are with the dead!
Still it is pleasure, though 'tis mix'd with pain,
To think of joys that cannot live again!
Here cannot live; but they excite desire
Of purer kind, and heavenly thoughts inspire!

And now my mother, weaken'd in her mind,
Her will, subdued before, to me resign'd.
Wean'd from her late directors, by degrees
She sank resign'd, and only sought for ease:
In a small town upon the coast we fix'd;
Nor in amusement with associates mix'd.
My years—but other mode will I pursue,
And count my time by what I sought to do.

And was that mind at ease? could I avow
That no once leading thoughts engaged me now?
Was I convinced th' enthusiastic man
Had ruin'd what the loving boy began?

I answer doubting—I could still detect
Feelings too soft—yet him I could reject—
Feelings that came when I had least employ,
When common pleasures I could least enjoy—
When I was pacing lonely in the rays
Of a full moon, in lonely walks and ways—
When I was sighing o'er a tale's distress,
And paid attention to my Bible less.

These found, I sought my remedies for these;
I suffer'd common things my mind to please,
And common pleasures: seldom walk'd alone,
Nor when the moon upon the waters shone;
But then my candles lit, my window closed,
My needle took, and with my neighbors posed:
And in one year—nay, ere the end of one,
My labor ended, and my love was done.

My heart at rest, I boldly look'd within
And dared to ask it of its secret sin;
Alas! with pride it answered, "Look around,
And tell me where a better heart is found."
And then I traced my virtues: O! how few,
In fact, they were, and yet how vain I grew;
Thought of my kindness, condescension, ease,
My will, my wishes, nay, my power to please;
I judged me prudent, rational, discreet,
And void of folly, falsehood, and deceit;
I read, not lightly, as I some had known,
But made an author's meaning all my own;
In short, what lady could a poet choose
As a superior subject for his muse?

So said my heart; and Conscience straight replied—
"I say the matter is not fairly tried:
I am offended, hurt, dissatisfied;
First of the Christian graces let me see
What thy pretensions to humility?

Art thou prepared for trial? Wilt thou say
I am this being, and for judgment pray?
And with the gallant Frenchman, wilt thou cry,
When to thy judge presented, thus am I—
Thus was I formed—these talents I possess'd—
So I employed them—and thou know'st the rest?"

Thus Conscience; and she then a picture drew,
And bade me think and tremble at the view.
One I beheld—a wife, a mother—go
To gloomy scenes of wickedness and woe;
She sought her way through all things vile and base,
And made a prison a religious place:
Fighting her way—the way that angels fight
With powers of darkness—to let in the light;
Tell me, my heart, hast thou such victory won
As this, a sinner of thy sex, has done?
And calls herself a sinner? What art thou?
And where thy praise and exaltation now?
Yet is she tender, delicate, and nice,
And shrinks from all depravity and vice;
Shrinks from the ruffian gaze, the savage gloom,
That reign where guilt and misery find a home:
Guilt chain'd, and misery purchased; and with them
All we abhor, abominate, condemn—
The look of scorn, the scowl, th' insulting leer
Of shame, all fix'd on her who ventures here:

Yet all she braved! she kept her steadfast eye
On the dear cause, and brush'd the baseness by.
So would a mother press her darling child
Close to her breast, with tainted rays defiled.

But thou hast talents truly! say the ten:
Come, let us look at their improvement then,
What hast thou done to aid thy suffering kind,
To help the sick, the deaf, the lame, the blind?
Hast thou not spent thy intellectual force
On books abstruse, in critical discourse?
Wasting in useless energy thy days,
And idly listening to their common praise,
Who can a kind of transient fame dispense,
And say—"A woman of exceeding sense."

Thus tried, and failing, the suggestions fled,
And a corrected spirit reign'd instead.

My mother yet was living; but the flame
Of life now flash'd and fainter then became;
I made it pleasant, and was pleased to see
A parent looking as a child to me.

And now our humble place grew wondrous gay;
Come gallant persons in their red array:
All strangers welcome there, extremely welcome they.
When in the church I saw inquiring eyes
Fix'd on my face with pleasure and surprise;
And soon a knocking at my door was heard;
And soon the lover of my youth appear'd—
Frederick, in all his glory, glad to meet,
And say, "his happiness was now complete."

He told his flight from superstitious zeal;
But first what torments he was doom'd to feel:—
"The tender tears he saw from women fall—
The strong persuasion of the brethren all—
The threats of crazed enthusiasts, bound to keep
The struggling mind, and awe the straying sheep—
From these, their love, their curses, and their creed,
Was I by reason and exertion freed."

Then like a man who often had been told
And was convinced success attends the bold,
His former purpose he renew'd, and swore
He never loved me half so well before:
Before he felt a something to divide
The heart, that now had not a love beside.

In earlier times had I myself amused,
And first my swain perplex'd, and then refused;—
Cure for conceit—but now in purpose grave,
Strong and decisive the reply I gave.
Still he would come and talk as idlers do,
Both of his old associates and his new;
Those who their dreams and reveries receive
For facts, and those who would not facts believe.

He now conceived that truth was hidden, placed
He knew not where, she never could be traced;
"But that in every place, the world around,
Might some resemblance of the nymph be found:
Yet wise men knew these shadows to be vain,
Such as our true philosophers disdain—
They laugh to see what vulgar minds pursue—
Truth as a mistress, never in their view—
But there the shadow flies, and that, they cry, is true."

Thus, at the college and the meeting train,
My lover seem'd his acme to have gain'd;
With some compassion I essay'd a cure:
"If truth be hidden, why art thou so sure?"
This he mistook for tenderness, and cried,
"If sure of thee, I care not what beside!"
Compell'd to silence, I, in pure disdain,
Withdrew from one so insolent and vain;
He then retired; and I was kindly told,
"In pure compassion grew estranged and cold."

My mother died; but, in my grief, drew near
A bosom friend, who dried the useless tear:
We lived together; we combined our shares
Of the world's good, and learn'd to brave its cares;
We were the ladies of the place, and found
Protection and respect the country round;
We gave, and largely, for we wish'd to live
In good repute—for this 'tis good to give;
Our annual present to the priest convey'd
Was kindly taken;—we in comfort pray'd;
There none molested in the crimson pew
The worthy ladies, whom the vicar knew;
And we began to think that life might be,
Not happy all, but innocently free.

My friend in early life was bound to one
Of gentle kindred, but a younger son.
He fortune's smile with perseverance woo'd,
And wealth beneath the burning sun pursued:
There, urged by love and youthful hope, he went,
Loth; but 'twas all his fortune could present.
From hence he wrote; and, with a lover's fears,
And gloomy fondness, talk'd of future years;
To her devoted, his Priscilla found
His faithful heart still suffering with its wound,
That would not heal. A second time she heard;
And then no more: nor lover since appear'd;
Year after year the country's fleet arrived,
Confirm'd her fear, and yet her love survived;
It still was living; yet her hope was dead,
And youthful dreams, nay, youth itself, was fled;
And he was lost: so urged her friends, so she
At length believed, and thus retired with me;
She would a dedicated vestal prove,
And give her virgin vows to heaven and love;

She dwelt with fond regret on pleasures past,
With ardent hope on those that ever last;
Pious and tender, every day she view'd
With solemn joy our perfect solitude;
Her reading, that which most delighted her,
That soothed the passions, yet would gently stir;
The tender, softening, melancholy strain,
That caused not pleasure, but that vanquish'd pain,
In tears she read, and wept, and long'd to read again.
But other worlds were her supreme delight,
And there, it seem'd, she long'd to take her flight:
Yet patient, pensive, arm'd by thoughts sublime,
She watch'd the tardy steps of lingering time.

My friend, with face that most would handsome call,
Possess'd the charm that wins the heart of all;
And, thrice entreated by a lover's prayer,
She thrice refused him with determined air.

"No! had the world one monarch, and was he
All that the heart could wish its lord to be,—
Lovely and loving, generous, brave, and true,—
Vain were his hopes to waken hers anew!"
For she was wedded to ideal views,
And fancy's prospects, that she would not lose,
Would not forego to be a mortal's wife,
And wed the poor realities of life.

There was a day, ere yet the autumn closed,
When, ere her wintry wars, the earth reposed,
When from the yellow weed the feathery crown,
Light as the curling smoke, fell slowly down;
When the wing'd insect settled in our sight,
And waited vain to recommence her flight;
When the wide river was a silver sheet,
And on the ocean slept th' unanchored fleet;
When from our garden, as we look'd above,
There was no cloud, and nothing seem'd to move;
Then was my friend in ecstasies—she cried,
"There is, I feel there is, a world beside!
Martha, dear Martha! we shall hear not then
Of hearts distress'd by good or evil men,
But all will constant, tender, faithful be—
So had I been, and so had one with me;
But in this world the fondest and the best
Are the most tried, most troubled, and distress'd:
This is the place for trial, here we prove,
And there enjoy, the faithfulness of love.

"Nay, were he here in all the pride of youth,
With honor, valor, tenderness, and truth,
Entirely mine, yet what could I secure,
Or who one day of comfort could insure?"

"No! all is closed on earth, and there is now
Nothing to break th' indissoluble vow;
But in that world will be th' abiding bliss,
That pays for every tear and sigh in this."

Such her discourse, and more refined it grew,
Till she had all her glorious dream in view;
And she would further in that dream proceed
Than I dare go, who doubtfully agreed;
Smiling I ask'd, again to draw the soul
From flight so high, and fancy to control,
"If this be truth, the lover's happier way
Is distant still to keep the purposed day;
The real bliss would mar the fancied joy,
And marriage all the dream of love destroy."

She softly smiled, and as we gravely talk'd,
We saw a man, who up the gravel walk'd,
Not quite erect, nor quite by age depress'd,
A travel'd man, and as a merchant dress'd;
Large chain of gold upon his watch he wore,
Small golden buckles on his feet he bore;
A head of gold his costly cane display'd,
And all about him love of gold betray'd.

This comely man moved onward, and a pair
Of comely maidens met with serious air;
Till one exclaim'd, and wildly look'd around,
"O heav'n, 'tis Paul!" and dropt upon the ground;
But she recover'd soon, and you must guess
What then ensued, and how much happiness.
They parted lovers, both distress'd to part!
They met as neighbors, heal'd, and whole of heart:
She in his absence look'd to heaven for bliss,
He was contented with a world like this;
And she prepared in some new state to meet
The man now seeking for some snug retreat.
He kindly told her he was firm and true,
Nor doubted her, and bade her then adieu!
"What shall I do?" the sighing maid began,
"How lost the lover! O, how gross the man."

For the plain dealer had his wish declared,
Nor she, devoted victim! could be spared:
He spoke as one decided; she as one
Who fear'd the love, and would the lover shun.

"O Martha, sister of my soul! how dies
Each lovely view! for can I truth disguise,
That this is he? No! nothing shall persuade;
This is a man the naughty world has made,
An eating, drinking, buying, bargaining man—
And can I love him? No! I never can.
What once he was, what fancy gave beside,
Full well I know, my love was then my pride:
What time has done, what trade and travel wrought,
You see! and yet your sorrowing friend is sought;
But can I take him?"—"Take him not," I cried,
"If so averse—but why so soon decide?"

Meantime a daily guest the man appear'd,
Set all his sail, and for his purpose steer'd;
Low and familiar, loving, fierce and free,
He overpower'd her soft timidity;
Who, weak and vain, and grateful to behold
The man was hers, and hers would be the gold;
Thus sundry motives, more than I can name,
Leagu'd on his part, and she a wife became.

A home was offer'd, but I knew too well
What comfort was with married friends to dwell;
I was resign'd, and had I felt distress,
Again a lover offer'd some redress:
Behold, a hero of the buskin bears
My loss, and with consoling love appears;
Frederick was now a hero on the stage,
In all its glories, rhapsody, and rage;
Again himself he offer'd, offer'd all
That his a hero of the kind can call:
He for my sake would hope of fame resign,
And leave the applause of all the world for mine.
Hard fate was Frederick's never to succeed,
Yet ever try—but so it was decreed:
His mind was weaken'd; he would laugh and weep,
And swore profusely I had murder'd sleep,
Had quite unman'd him, cleft his heart in twain,
And he should never be nervous again.

He was himself; weak, nervous, kind, and poor,
Ill dress'd and ill, he besieged my door,
Borrow'd,—or, worse, made verses on my charms,
And did his best to fill me with alarms;
I had some pity, and I sought the price
Of my repose—my hero was not nice:
There was a loan, and promise I should be
From all the efforts of his fondness free.

From hunger's future claims, or those of vanity.
"Yet," said he, bowing, "do to study take!
O! what a Desdemona wouldst thou make!"
Thus was my lover lost; yet even now
He claims one thought, and this we will allow.

His father liv'd to an extreme old age,
But never kind!—his son had left the stage,
And gain'd some office, but a humble place,
And that he lost! What sharpen'd his disgrace,
Urg'd him to seek his father—but too late,
His jealous brothers watch'd and barr'd the gate.

The old man died; but there is one who pays
A moderate pension for his latter days,
Who, though assured inquiries will offend,
Is ever asking for this unknown friend;
Some partial lady, whom he hopes to find
As to his wants so to his wishes kind.

"Be still," a cool adviser sometimes writes—
"Nay, but," says he, "the gentle maid invites—
Do let me know the young! the soft! the fair!"

"Old man," 'tis answer'd, "take thyself to prayer!
Be clean, be sober, to thy priest apply,
And—dead to all around thee—learn to die!"

Now had I rest from life's strong hopes and fears,
And no disturbance mark'd the flying years;
So on in quiet might those years have past,
But for a light adventure, and a last.
A handsome boy, from school-day bondage free,
Came with mamma to gaze upon the sea;
With soft blue eye he look'd upon the waves,
And talk'd of treacherous rocks, and seamen's graves;
There was much sweetness in his boyish smile,
And signs of feelings frank, that knew no guile.

The partial mother, of her darling proud,
Besought my friendship, and her own avow'd;
She praised her Rupert's person, spirit, ease,
How fond of study, yet how form'd to please;
In our discourse he often bore a part,
And talk'd, heaven bless him, of his feeling heart;
He spoke of pleasures souls like his enjoy,
And hated Lovelace like a virtuous boy;
He felt for Clementina's holy strife,
And was Sir Charles as large and true as life:
For Virtue's heroines was his soul distress'd;
True love and guileless honour fill'd his breast,
When, as the subjects drew the frequent sigh,
The tear stood trembling in his large blue eye,
And softly he exclaim'd, "Sweetest sympathy!"

When thus I heard the handsome stripling speak,
I smiled assent and thought to pat his cheek;
But when I saw the feelings blushing there,
Signs of emotions strong, they said—*forbear!*

The youth would speak of his intent to live
On that estate which heaven was pleased to give,
There with the partner of his joys to dwell,
And nurse the virtues that he loved so well;
The humble good of happy swains to share,
And from the cottage drive distress and care;
To the dear infants make some pleasures known,
And teach, he gravely said, the virtues to his own.

He loved to read in verse, and verse-like prose,
The softest tales of love-inflicted woes;
When, looking fondly, he would smile and cry,
"Is there not bliss in sensibility?"

We walk'd together, and it seem'd not harm
In linking thought with thought, and arm with arm,
Till the dear boy would talk too much of bliss,
And indistinctly murmur—"such as this."

When no maternal wish her heart beguiled,
The lady call'd her son "the darling child;"
When with some nearer view her speech began,
She changed her phrase, and said, "the good young man!"
And lost, when hinting of some future bride,
The woman's prudence in the mother's pride.

Still decent fear and conscious folly strove
With fond presumption and aspiring love;
But now too plain to me the strife appear'd,
And what he sought I knew, and what he fear'd;
The trembling hand and frequent sigh disclosed
The wish that prudence, care, and time opposed.
Was I not pleased, will you demand?—Amused
By boyish love, that woman's pride refused?
This I acknowledge, and from day to day
Resolved no longer at such game to play;
Yet I forbore, though to my purpose true,
And firmly fix'd to bid the youth adieu.

There was a moonlight eve, serenely cool,
When the vast ocean seem'd a mighty pool;
Save the small rippling waves that gently beat,
We scarcely heard them falling, at our feet:
His mother absent, absent every sound
And every sight that could the youth confound;
The arm, fast lock'd in mine, his fear betray'd
And when he spoke not, his designs convey'd
He oft-times gasp'd for breath, he tried to speak
And studying words, at last had words to seek.

Silent the boy, by silence more betray'd,
And fearing lest he should appear afraid,
He knelt abruptly, and his speech began—
"Pity the pangs of an unhappy man."

"Be sure," I answer'd, "and relieve them too—
But why that posture? What the woes to you?
To feel for others' sorrows is humane,
But too much feeling is our virtue's bane.

Come, my dear Rupert! now your tale disclose,
That I may know the sufferer and his woes,
Know there is pain that wilful man endures,
That our reproof and not our pity cures;
For though for such assumed distress we grieve,
Since they themselves as well as we deceive,
Yet we assist not."—"The unhappy youth,
Unhappy then, beheld not all the truth.

"O! what is this?" exclaim'd the dubious boy,
"Words that confuse the being they destroy?"
So have I read the gods to madness drive
The man condemn'd with adverse fate to strive;
O! make thy victim though by misery sure,
And let me know the pangs I must endure;
For, like the Grecian warrior, I can pray
Falling to perish in the face of day."

"Pretty, my Rupert; and it proves the use
Of all that learning which the schools produce:
But come, your arm—no trembling, but attend
To sober truth, and a maternal friend.

"You ask for pity?"—"O! indeed I do."
"Well then, you have it, and assistance too:
Suppose us married!"—"O! the heavenly thought!"

"Nay—nay, my friend, be you by wisdom taught;
For wisdom tells you, love would soon subside,
Fall, and make room for penitence and pride;
Then would you meet the public eye, and blame
Your private taste, and be o'erwhelm'd with shame:
How must it then your bosom's peace destroy
To hear it said, 'The mother and her boy'
And then to show the sneering world it lies,
You would assume the man and tyrannize;
E'en Time, Care's general soother, would augment
Your self-reproaching, growing discontent.

Add twenty years to my precarious life,
And lo! your aged, feeble, wailing wife;
Displeased, displeasing, discontented, blamed;
Both, and with cause, ashamed and ashamed:
When I shall bend beneath a press of time,
Thou wilt be all erect in manhood's prime;
Then wilt thou fly to younger minds 't assuage
Thy bosom's pain, and I in jealous age
Shall move contempt, if still; if active, rage;
And though in anguish all my days are past,
Yet far beyond thy wishes they may last;
May last till thou, thy better prospects fled,
Shall have no comfort when thy wife is dead.

Then thou in turn, though none will call thee old,
Will feel thy spirit fled, thy bosom cold;
No strong or eager wish to wake the will,
Life will appear to stagnate and be still,
As now with me it slumbers; O! rejoice
That I attend not to that pleading voice;
So will new hopes this troubled dream succeed,
And one will gladly hear my Rupert plead."

Ask you, while thus I could the youth deny
Was I unmoved?—Inexorable I,
Fix'd and determined: thrice he made his prayer,
With looks of sadness first, and then despair;
Thrice doom'd to bear refusal, not exempt,
At the last effort, from a slight contempt.

Did his distress, his pains, your joy excite?—
No; but I fear'd his perseverance might.
Was there no danger in the moon's soft rays,
To hear the handsome stripling's earnest prayer?
Was there no fear that while my words reproved
The eager youth, I might myself be moved?

Not for his sake alone I cried, Persist
No more, and with a frown the cause dismiss'd.
Seek you th' event?—I scarcely need reply,
Love, unreturn'd, will languish, pine, and die:
We l'ed awhile in friendship, and with joy
I saw part in peace the amorous boy.

We met me ten years after, and he then
Was married, and as cool as married men;
He talk'd of war and taxes, trade and farms,
And thought no more of me, or of my charms.

We spoke; and when, alluding to the past,
Something of meaning in my look I cast,
He, who could never thought or wish disguise,
Look'd in my face with trouble and surprise;
To kill reserve, I seized his arm, and cried,
"Know me, my lord!" when laughing, he replied,
Wonder'd again, and look'd upon my face,
And seem'd unwilling marks of time to trace;
But soon I brought him fairly to confess,
That boys in love judge ill of happiness.

Love had his day—to graver subjects led,
My will is govern'd, and my mind is fed;
And to more vacant bosoms I resign
The hopes and fears that once affected mine.

BOOK XII. SIR OWEN DALE.

*The Rector at the Hall—Why absent—He relates the Story of
Sir Owen—His Marriage—Death of his Lady—His Mind
acquires new Energy—His Passions awake—His Taste and
Sensibility—Admires a Lady—Camilla—Her Purpose—Sir
Owen's Disappointment—His Spirit of Revenge—How gra-
tified—The Dilemma of Love—An Example of Forgiveness
—Its Effect.*

AGAIN the Brothers saw their friend the Priest,
Who shared the comforts he so much increas'd;
Absent of late—and thus the Squire address'd,
With welcome smile, his ancient friend and guest.

"What has detain'd thee? some parochial case?
Some man's desertion, or some maid's disgrace?
Or wert thou call'd, as parish priest, to give
Name to a new-born thing that would not live,

That its weak glance upon the world had thrown,
And shrank in terror from the prospect shown?
Or hast thou heard some dying wretch deplore,
That of his pleasures he could taste no more?

Who wish'd thy aid his spirit to sustain,
And drive away the fears that gave him pain?
For priests are thought to have a patent charm
To ease the dying sinner of alarm:

Or was thy business of the carnal sort,
And wert thou gone a patron's smile to court,
And Croft or Creswell wouldst to Bunning add,
Or take, kind soul! whatever could be had?
Once more I guess: th' election now is near,
My friend, perhaps, is sway'd, by hope or fear,
And all a patriot's wishes, forth to ride,
And hunt for votes to prop the fav'rite side."

"More private duty called me hence, to pay
My friends respect on a rejoicing day,"
Replied the Rector: "there is born a son,
Pride of an ancient race, who pray'd for one,
And long desponded. Would you hear the tale—
Ask, and 'tis granted—of Sir Owen Dale?"

"Grant," said the Brothers, "for we humbly ask
Ours be the gratitude, and thine the task:
Yet dine we first: then to this tale of thine,
As to thy sermon, seriously incline:

In neither case our Rector shall complain,
Of this recited, that composed in vain.
Something we heard of vengeance, who appall'd,
Like an infernal spirit, him who call'd;

And, ere he vanish'd, would perform his part,
Inflicting tortures on the wounded heart;
Of this but little from report we know;
If you the progress of revenge can show,

Give it, and all its horrors, if you please,
We hear our neighbor's sufferings much at ease.

"Is it not so? For do not men delight—
We call them men—our bruisers to excite,
And urge with bribing gold, and feed them for the fight?
Men beyond common strength, of giant size,
And threat'ning terrors in each other's eyes;

When in their naked, native force display'd,
Look answers look, affrighting and afraid:
While skill, like spurs and feeding, gives the arm
The wicked power to do the greater harm:

Maim'd in the strife, the falling man sustains
Th' insulting shout, that aggravates his pains:
Man can bear this; and shall thy hearers heed
A tale of human sufferings? 'Come! proceed."

This urged, the worthy Rector thought it meet
Some moral truth, as preface, to repeat;
Reflection serious,—common-place, 'tis true,—
But he would act as he was wont to do,
And bring his morals in his neighbor's view.

"O! how the passions, insolent and strong,
Bear our weak minds their rapid course along;
Make us the madness of their will obey;
Then die, and leave us to our griefs a prey!"

Sir Owen Dale his fortieth year had seen,
With temper placid, and with mind serene:

Rich; early married to an easy wife,
They led in comfort a domestic life:
He took of his affairs a prudent care,
And was by early habit led to spare;
Not as a miser, but in pure good taste,
That scorn'd the idle wantonness of waste.

In fact, the lessons he from prudence took
Were written in his mind, as in a book:
There what to do he read, and what to shun;
And all commanded was with promptness done:
He seem'd without a passion to proceed,
Or one whose passions no correction need;
Yet some believed those passions only slept,
And were in bounds by early habits kept:
Curb'd as they were by fetters worn so long,
There were who judged them a rebellious throng.

To these he stood, not as a hero true,
Who fought his foes, and in the combat slew,
But one who all those foes, when sleeping, found,
And, unresisted, at his pleasure bound.

We thought—for I was one—that we espied
Some indications strong of dormant pride;
It was his wish in peace with all to live;
And he could pardon, but could not forgive:
Nay, there were times when stern defiance shook
The moral man, and threaten'd in his look.

Should these fierce passions—so we reason'd—break
Their long-worn chain, what ravage will they make!

In vain will prudence then contend with pride,
And reason vainly bid revenge subside;
Anger will not to meek persuasion bend,
Nor to the pleas of hope or fear attend:

What curb shall, then, in their disordered race,
Check the wild passions? what the calm replace?
Virtue shall strive in vain; and has he help in grace?

While yet the wife with pure discretion ruled,
The man was guided, and the mind was school'd;
But then that mind unaided ran to waste:
He had some learning, but he wanted taste:

Placid, not pleased—contented, not employ'd,—
He neither time improved, nor life enjoy'd.

That wife expir'd, and great the loss sustain'd,
Though much distress he neither felt nor feign'd;
He loved not warmly; but the sudden stroke
Deeply and strongly on his habits broke.

He had no child to soothe him, and his farm,
His sports, his speculations, lost their charm;
Then would he read and travel, would frequent
Life's busy scenes, and forth Sir Owen went:
The mind, that now was free, unfix'd, unchecked,
Read and observed with wonderful effect;
And still the more he gain'd, the more he long'd
To pay that mind his negligence had wrong'd;

He felt his pleasures rise as he improved;
And, first enduring, then the labor loved.

But, by the light let in, Sir Owen found
Some of those passions had their chain unbound;
As from a trance they rose to act their part,
And seize, as due to them, a feeling heart.

His very person now appear'd refined,
And took some graces from th' improving mind:
He grew polite without a fil'd intent,
And to the world a willing pupil went.

Restore him twenty years,—restore him ten,—
And bright had been his earthly prospect then;
But much refinement, when it late arrives,
May be the grace, not comfort, of our lives.

Now had Sir Owen feeling; things of late
Indifferent, he began to love or hate:

What once could neither good nor ill impart
Now pleased the senses, and now touch'd the heart;
Prospects and pictures struck th' awaken'd sigh,
And each new object gave a new delight.

He, like th' imperfect creature who had shaped
A shroud to hide him, had at length escaped;
Changed from his grub-like state, to crawl no more,
But a wing'd being, pleased and form'd to soar.

Now, said his friends, while thus his views improve,
And his mind softens, what if he should love?
True; life with him has yet serene appear'd;
And therefore love in wisdom should be fear'd:

Forty and five his years, and then to sigh
For beauty's favor!—Son of frailty, fly!

Alas! he loved; it was our fear, but ours,
His friends alone. He doubted not his powers
To win the prize, or to repel the charm,
To gain the battle, or escape the harm;

For he had never yet resistance proved,
Nor fear'd that friends should say—'Alas! he loved.'

Younger by twenty years, Camilla found
Her face unwill'd when she smiled or frown'd:
Of all approved; in manner, form, and air,
Made to attract; gay, elegant, and fair:

She had, in beauty's aid, a fair pretence
To cultivated, strong intelligence;
For she a clear and ready mind had fed
With wholesome food; unhurt by what she read:

She loved to please; but, like her dangerous sex,
To please the more whom she design'd to vex.
This heard Sir Owen, and he saw it true;
It promised pleasure, promised danger too;

But this he knew not then, or slighted if he knew.

Yet he delay'd, and would by trials prove
That he was safe; would see the signs of love;
Would not address her while a fear remain'd;
But win his way, assured of what he gain'd.

This saw the lady, not displeased to find
A man at once so cautious and so blind:
She saw his hopes that she would kindly show
Proofs of her passion—then she his should know.

"So, when my heart is bleeding in his sight,
His love acknowledged will the pains requite;
It is, when conquer'd, he the heart regards;
Well, good Sir Owen! let us play our cards."

He spake her praise in terms that love affords,
By words select, and looks surpassing words:
Kindly she listen'd, and in turn essay'd
To pay th' applause—and she amply paid:

A beautiful flatterer's feel
The ill you cause, when thus in praise you deal;
For surely he is more than man, or less,
When praised by lips that he would die to press,

And yet his senses undisturb'd can keep,
Can calmly reason, or can soundly sleep.

Not so Sir Owen; him Camilla praised,
And lofty hopes and strong emotions raised;
This had alone the strength of man subdued;
But this enchantress various arts pursued.

Let others pray for music—others pray'd
In vain:—Sir Owen ask'd, and was obey'd;
Let others, walking, sue that arm to take,
Unmoved she kept it for Sir Owen's sake;

Each small request she granted, and though small,
He thought them pledges of her granting all.

And now the lover, casting doubt aside,
Urged the fond suit that could not be denied;
Joy more than reverence moved him when he said,
"Now banish all my fears, angelic maid!"

And as she paused for words, he gaily cried,
"I must not, cannot, will not be denied."

Ah! good Sir Owen, think not favors, such
As artful maids allow, amount to much;
The sweet, small, poison'd baits, that take the eye
And win the soul of all who venture nigh.

Camilla listen'd, paused, and look'd surprise,
Fair witch! exulting in her witcheries!
She turn'd aside her face, withdrew her hand,
And softly said, "Sir, let me understand."

"Nay, my dear lady! what can words explain,
If all my looks and actions plead in vain?
I love"—She show'd a cool respectful air,
And he began to falter in his prayer,

Yet urged her kindness—Kindness she confess'd,
It was esteem, she felt it, and express'd,
For her dear father's friend; and it was right
That friend of his—she thought of hers—to slight?

This to the word'ring lover strange and new,
And false appear'd—he would not think it true:
Still he pursued the lovely prize, and still
Heard the cold words, design'd his hopes to kill;

He felt dismay'd as he perceived success
Had inverse ratio, more obtaining less;
And still she grew more cool in her replies,
And talk'd of age and improprieties.

Then to his friends, although it hurt his pride,
And to the lady's, he for aid applied;
Who kindly wou'd for him, but strongly were denied.

And now it was those fiercer passions rose,
Urged by his love to murder his repose;
Shame shook his soul to be deceived so long,
And fierce Revenge for such contemptuous wrong;

Jealous he grew, and Jealousy supplied
His mind with rage, unsmooth'd, unsatisfied;
And grievous were the pangs of deeply wounded Pride.
His generous soul had not the grief sustain'd,

Had he not thought, 'Revenge may be obtain'd.'

Camilla grieved, but grief was now too late;
She hush'd her fears, and left the event to fate;
Four years elapsed, nor knew Sir Owen yet
How to repay the meditated debt;

The lovely foe was in her thirtieth year,
Nor saw the favorite of the heart appear;
'Tis sure less sprightly the fair nymph became,
And spoke of former levities with shame;

But this, alas! was not in time confess'd,
And vengeance waited in Sir Owen's breast.

But now the time arrives—the maid must feel
And grieve for wounds that she refused to heal.
Sir Owen, childless, in his love had rear'd
A sister's son, and now the youth appear'd

In all the pride of manhood, and, beside,
With all a soldier's spirit and his pride:
Valiant and poor, with all that arms bestow,
And wants that captains in their quarters know;

Yet to his uncle's generous heart was due
The praise, that wants of any kind were few.

When he appear'd, Sir Owen felt a joy
Unknown before, his vengeance bless'd the boy—
"To him I dare confide a cause so just;
Love him she may—O! could I say, she must."

Thus fix'd, he more than usual kindness show'd,
Nor let the Captain name the debt he owed;
But when he spoke of gratitude, exclaim'd,
"My dearest Morden! make me not ashamed;

Each for a friend should do the best he can,
The most obliged is the obliging man;
But if you wish to give as well as take,
You may a debtor of your uncle make."
Morden was earnest in his wish to know
How he could best his grateful spirit show.

Now the third dinner had their powers renew'd,
And fruit and wine upon the table stood;
The fire brought comfort, and the warmth it lent
A cheerful spirit to the feelings sent,
When thus the Uncle—"Morden, I depend
On you for aid—assist me as a friend:
Full well I know that you would much forego,
And much endure, to wreak me on my foe.
Charles, I am wrong'd, insulted—nay, be still,
Nor look so fiercely,—there are none to kill.

"I loved a lady, somewhat late in life,
Perhaps too late, and would have made a wife;
Nay, she consented; for consent I call
The mark'd distinction that was seen of all,
And long was seen; but when she knew my pain,
Saw my first wish her favor to obtain,
And ask her hand—no sooner was I ask'd,
Than she, the lovely Jezebel unmask'd;
And by her haughty airs, and scornful pride,
My peace was wounded—nay, my reason tried;
I felt despised and fallen when we met,
And she, O folly! looks too lovely yet;
Yet love no longer in my bosom glows,
But my heart warms at the revenge it owes.

"O! that I saw her with her soul on fire,
Desperate from love, and sickening with desire;
While all beheld her just, unpitied pain,
Grown in neglect, and sharpen'd by disdain!
Let her be jealous of each maid she sees,
Striving by every fruitless art to please,
And when she fondly looks, let looks and fondness tease
So lost on passion's never resting sea,
Hopeless and helpless, let her think of me!
Charles, thou art handsome, nor canst want the art
To warm a cold or win a wanton heart;
Be my avenger!"

Charles, with smile, not vain,
Nor quite unmix'd with pity and disdain,
Sat mute in wonder; but he sat not long
Without reflection:—Was Sir Owen wrong?
"So must I think; for can I judge it right
To treat a lovely lady with despite?
Because she play'd too roughly with the love
Of a fond man whom she could not approve,
And yet to vex him for the love he bore
Is cause enough for his revenge, and more.

"But, thoughts, to council!—Do I wear a charm
That will preserve my citadel from harm?
Like the good knight, I have a heart that feels
The wounds that beauty makes and kindness heals:
Beauty she has, it seems, but is not kind—
So found Sir Owen, and so I may find.

"Yet why, O! heart of tinder, why afraid?
Comes so much danger from so fair a maid?
Wilt thou be made a voluntary prize
To the fierce firing of two wicked eyes?
Think her a foe, and on the danger rush
Nor let thy kindred for a coward blush.

"But how if this fair creature should incline
To think too highly of this love of mine,
And, taking all my counterfeit address
For sterling passion, should the like profess?

"Nay, this is folly: or if I perceive
Ought of the kind, I can but take my leave;
And if the heart should feel a little sore,
Contempt and anger will its ease restore.

"Then, too, to his all bounteous hand I owe
All I possess, and almost all I know;
And shall I for my friend no hazard run,
Who seeks no more for all his love has done?

"'Tis but to meet and bow, to talk and smile,
To act a part, and put on love awhile:
And the good knight shall see, this trial made,
That I have just his talents to persuade;
For why the lady should her heart bestow
On me, or I of her enamour'd grow,
There's none can reason give, there's none can danger show."

These were his rapid thoughts, and then he spoke.
"I make a promise, and will not revoke;
You are my judge in what is fit and right,
And I obey you—bid me love or fight;
Yet had I rather, so the act could meet
With your concurrence,—not to play the cheat;
In a fair cause!"—"Charles, fighting for your king,
Did you e'er judge the merits of the thing?
Show me a monarch who has cause like mine,
And yet what soldier would his cause decline?"

Poor Charles or saw not, or refused to see,
How weak the reasoning of our hopes may be,
And said—"Dear uncle, I my king obey'd,
And for his glory's sake the soldier play'd;
Now a like duty shall your nephew rule,
And for your vengeance I will play the fool."

"Twas well; but ere they parted for repose,
A solemn oath must the engagement close.
"Swear to me, nephew, from the day you meet
This cruel girl, there shall be no deceit;

That by all means approved and used by man
You win this dangerous woman, if you can;
That being won, you my commands obey,
Leave her lamenting, and pursue your way;
And that, as in my business, you will take
My will as guide, and no resistance make:
Take now an oath—within the volume look,
There is the Gospel—swear, and kiss the book."

"It cannot be," thought Charles, "he cannot rest
In this strange humor,—it is all a jest,
All but dissimulation—Well, Sir, there;
Now I have sworn as you would have me swear."

"'Tis well," the uncle said in solemn tone;
"Now send me vengeance, Fate, and groan for groan!"

The time is come; the soldier now must meet
Th' unconscious object of the sworn deceit.
They meet; each other's looks the pair explore,
And, such their fortune, wish'd to part no more.
Whether a man is thus disposed to break
An evil compact he was forced to make,
Or whether some contention in the breast
Will not permit a feeling heart to rest;
Or was it nature, who in every case
Has made such mind subjected to such fate;
Whate'er the cause, no sooner met the pair
Than both began to love, and one to feel despair.

But the fair damsel saw with strong delight
Th' impression made, and gloried in the sight:
No chilling doubt alarm'd her tender breast,
But she rejoiced in all his looks profess'd;
Long ere his words her lover's hopes convey'd
They warm'd the bosom of the conscious maid;
One spirit seem'd each nature to inspire,
And the two hearts were fix'd in one desire.

"Now," thought the courteous maid, "my father's friend
Will ready pardon to my fault extend;
He shall no longer lead that I ermit's life,
But love his mistress in his nephew's wife;
My humble duty shall his anger kill,
And I who fled his love will meet his will,
Prevent his least desire, and every wish fulfil."

Hail, happy power! that to the present lends
Such views; not all on Fortune's wheel depends,
Hope, fair enchantress, drives each cloud away,
And now enjoys the glad, but distant day.

Still fears ensued; for love produces fear.—

"To this dear maid can I indeed be dear?
My fatal oath, alas! I now repeat;
Stern in his purpose, he will not relent;
Would ere that oath, I had Camilla seen!
I had not then my honor's victim been:
I must be honest, yet I know not how,
'Tis crime to break, and death to keep my vow."

Sir Owen closely watch'd both maid and man,
And saw with joy proceed his cruel plan;
Then gave his praise—"She has it—has it deep
In her capricious heart,—it murders sleep;
You see the looks that grieve, you see the eyes that weep;
Now breathe again, dear youth, the kindling fire,
And let her feel what she could once inspire."

Alas! obedience was an easy task,
So might he cherish what he meant to ask;
He ventured soon, for Love prepared his way,
He sought occasion, he forbade delay;
In spite of vow foregone he taught the youth
The looks of passion, and the words of truth;
In spite of woman's caution, doubt, and fear,
He bade her credit all his wish'd to hear;
An honest passion ruled in either breast,
And both believed the truth that both profess'd.

But now, 'mid all her new-born hopes, the eyes
Of fair Camilla saw through all disguise,
Reserve, and apprehension—Charles, who now
Grieved for his duty, and abhor'd his vow,
Told the full fact, and it endear'd him more;
She felt her power, and pardon'd all he swore,
Since to his vow he could his wish prefer,
And loved the man who gave his world for her.

What must they do, and how their work begin,
Can they that temper to their wishes win?
They tried, they fail'd; and all they did t' assuage
The tempest of his soul provoked his rage;
The uncle met the youth with angry look,
And cried, "Remember, Sir, the oath you took;
You have my pity, Charles, but nothing more
Death, and death only, shall her peace restore;
And am I dying?—I shall live to view
The harlot's sorrow, and enjoy it too.

"How! Words offend you? I have borne for years
Unheeded anguish, shed derided tears,
Felt scorn in every look, endured the stare
Of wondering fools, who never felt a care;
On me all eyes were fix'd, and I the while
Sustain'd the insult of a rival's smile.

"And shall I now—entangled thus my foe,
My honest vengeance for a boy forego?
A boy forewarn'd, forearm'd? Shall this be borne,
And I be cheated, Charles, and thou forewarn'd?
Hope not, I say, for thou mayst change as well
The sentence graven on the gates of hell—
Here bid adieu to hope,—here hopeless beings dwell.

"But does she love thee, Charles? I cannot live
Dishonor'd, unrevenged—I may forgive,
But to thy oath I bind thee; on thy soul
Seek not my injured spirit to control;
Seek not to soften, I am hard of heart,
Harden'd by insult—leave her now, and part,
And let me know she grieves while I enjoy her smart."

Charles first in anger to the knight replied,
Then felt the clog upon his soul, and sigh'd
To his obedience made his wishes stoop
And now admitted, now excluded hope;
As lovers do, he saw a prospect fair,
And then so dark, he sank into despair.

The uncle grieved; he even told the youth
That he was sorry, and it seem'd a truth;
But though it vex'd, it varied not his mind,
He bound himself, and would his nephew bind.

"I told him this, placed danger in his view,
Bade him be certain, bound him to be true;
And shall I now my purposes reject,
Because my warnings were of no effect?"

Thus felt Sir Owen as a man whose cause
Is very good—it had his own applause.

Our knight a tenant had in high esteem
His constant boast, when justice was his theme:
He praised the farmer's sense, his shrewd discourse,
Free without rudeness, manly, and not coarse;
As farmer, tenant, nay, as man, the knight
Thought Ellis all that is approved and right;
Then he was happy, and some envy drew,
For knowing more than other farmers knew;
They call'd him learned, and it sooth'd their pride,
While he in his was pleased and gratified.

Still more t' offend, he to the altar led
The vicar's niece, to early reading bred;
Who, though she freely ventured on the life,
Could never fully be the farmer's wife;
She had a softness, gentleness, and ease,
Sure a coarse mind to humble and displease:
O! had she never known a fault beside,
How vain their spite, how impotent their pride!

Three darling girls the happy couple bless'd
Who now the sweetest lot of life possess'd;
For what can more a grateful spirit move
Than health, with competence, and peace, with love?
Ellis would sometimes, thriving man! retire
To the town inn, and quit the parlor fire;
But he was ever kind where'er he went,
And trifling sums in his amusements spent:
He bought, he thought for her—she should have been con-
tent:

Of, when he cash received at Smithfield mart,
At Cranbourn-alley he would leave a part;
And, if to town he follow'd what he sold,
Sure was his wife a present to behold.

Still, when his evenings at the inn were spent,
She smudged at home in sullen discontent;
And, sighing, yielded to a wish that some
With social spirit to the farm would come:
There was a farmer in the place, whose name,
And skill in rural arts, was known to fame;
He had a pupil, by his landlord sent,
On terms that gave the parties much content;
The youth those arts, and those alone, should learn,
With aught beside his guide had no concern:
He might to neighbor towns or distant ride,
And there amusements seek without a guide;
With handsome prints his private room was graced,
His music there, and there his books were placed:
Men knew not if he farm'd, but they allow'd him taste.

Books, prints, and music, cease, at times, to charm,
And sometimes men can neither ride nor farm;
They look for kindred minds, and Cecil found,
In Farmer Ellis, one inform'd and sound;
But in his wife—I hate the fact I tell—
A lovely being, who could please too well:
And he was one who never would deny
Himself a pleasure, or indeed would try.

Early and well the wife of Ellis knew
Where danger was, and trembled at the view;
So evil spirits tremble, but are still
Evil, and lose not the rebellious will:
She sought not safety from the fancied crime,
"And why retreat before the dangerous time?"

Of came the student of the farm and read,
And found his mind with more than reading fed:
This Ellis seeing, left them, or he staid,
As pleased him, not offended nor afraid:
He came in spirits with his girls to play,
Then ask excuse, and, laughing, walk away:
When, as he entered, Cecil ceased to read,
He would exclaim, "Proceed, my friend, proceed!"
Or, sometimes weary, would to bed retire,
And fear and anger by his ease inspire.

"My conversation does he then despise?
Leaves he this slighted face for other eyes?"
So said Alicia; and she dwelt so long
Upon that thought, to leave her was to wrong.

Alas! the woman loved the soothing tongue,
That yet pronounced her beautiful and young;
The tongue that, seeming careless, ever praised;
The eye that roving, on her person gazed;

The ready service, on the watch to please;
And all such sweet, small courtesies as these.

Still there was virtue, but a rolling stone
On a hill's brow is not more quickly gone;
The slightest motion,—ceasing from our care,—
A moment's absence,—when we're not aware,—
When down it rolls, and at the bottom lies,
Sunk, lost, degraded, never more to rise!
Far off the glorious height from whence it fell,
With all things base and infamous to dwell.

Friendship with woman is a dangerous thing—
Thence hopes avow'd and bold confessions spring:
Fralties confess'd to other frailties lead,
And new confusions new desires succeed;
And, when the friends have thus their hearts disclosed,
They find how little is to guilt opposed.

The foe's attack will on the fort begin,
When he is certain of a friend within.

When all was lost,—or, in the lover's sight,
When all was won,—the lady thought of flight.

"What! sink a slave?" she said, "and with deceit
The rigid virtue of a husband meet?
No! arm'd with death, I would his fury brave,
And own the justice of the blow he gave!
But thus to see him easy, careless, cold,
And his confiding folly to behold;

To feel incessant fears that he should read,
In looks assumed, the cause whence they proceed,
I cannot brook; nor will I here abide
Till chance betrays the crime that shame would hide:

Fly with me, Henry! Henry sought in vain
To soothe her terrors and her griefs restrain:

He saw the lengths that women dared to go,
And fear'd the husband both as friend and foe.

Of farming weary—for the guilty mind
Can no resource in guiltless studies find,

Left to himself, his mother all unknown,
His titled father, loth the boy to own,

Had him to decent expectations bred,
A favor'd offspring of a lawless bed;

And would he censure one who should pursue
The way he took? Alicia yet was new:

Her passion pleased him: he agreed on flight:
They fix'd the method, and they chose the night.

Then, while the Farmer read of public crimes,
Collating coolly Chronicles and Times,

The flight was taken by the guilty pair,
That made one passage in the columns there.

The heart of Ellis bled; the comfort, pride,
The hope and stay of his existence died;

Rage from the ruin of his peace arose,
And he would follow and destroy his foes;

Would with wild haste the guilty pair pursue,
And when he found—Good heaven! what would he do?

That wretched woman he would wildly seize,
And agonize her heart, his own to ease;

That guilty man would grasp, and in her sight
Insult his pangs, and her despair excite;

Bring death in view, and then the stroke suspend,
And draw out tortures till his life should end:

O! it should stand recorded in all time,
How they transgress'd, and he avenged the crime!

In this bad world should all his business cease,
He would not seek—he would not taste of peace;

But wrath should live till vengeance had her due,
And with his wrath his life should perish too.

His girls—not his—he would not be so weak—
Child was a word he never more must speak!

How did he know what villains had defiled
His honest bed?—He spurn'd the name of child:

Keep them he must; but he would coarsely hide
Their forms, and nip the growth of woman's pride;

He would consume their flesh, abridge their food,
And kill the mother-vice in their blood.

—

All this Sir Owen heard, and grieved for all;
He with the husband mourn'd Alicia's fall;

But urged the vengeance with a spirit strong,
As one whose own rose high against the wrong:

He saw his tenant by this passion moved,
Shared in his wrath, and his revenge approved.

Years now unseen, he mourn'd this tenant's fate,
And wonder'd how he bore his widow's state;

Still he would mention Ellis with the pride
Of one who felt himself to worth allied:

Such were his notions—had been long, but now
He wish'd to see if vengeance lived, and how:

He doubted not a mind so strong must feel
Most righteously, and righteous measures deal.

Then would he go, and haply he might find
Some new excitement for a weary mind;

Might learn the miseries of a pair undone,
One scorn'd and hated, lost and perish'd one:

Yes, he would praise to virtuous anger give,
And so his vengeance should be nurs'd and live.

Ellis was glad to see his landlord come,
A transient joy broke in upon his gloom,

And pleased he led the knight to the superior room;
Where she was wont in happier days to sit,
Who paid with smiles his condescending wit.

There the sad husband, who had seldom been,
Where prints acquired in happier days were seen,

Now struck by these, and carried to the past,
A painful look on every object cast:

Sir Owen saw his tenant's troubled state,
But still he wish'd to know the offender's fate.

"Know you they suffer, Ellis?"—Ellis knew:—
"Tis well! 'tis just! but have they all their due?"

Have they in mind and body, head and heart,
Sustain'd the pangs of their accursed part?"

"They have!"—"Tis well!"—"and wants enough to shake
The firmest mind, the stoutest heart to break."

"But have you seen them in such misery dwell?"
"In misery past description."—"That is well."

"Alas! Sir Owen, it perhaps is just,—
Yet I began my purpose to distrust;

For they to justice have discharged a debt,
That vengeance surely may her claim forget."

"Man, can you pity?"

"As a man I feel
Miseries like theirs."

"But never would you heal?"

"Hear me, Sir Owen:—I had sought them long,
Urged by the pain of ever present wrong,

Yet had not seen; and twice the year came round—
Years hateful now—ere I my victims found:

But I did find them, in the dungeon's gloom
Of a small garret—a precarious home,

For that depended on the weekly pay,
And they were sorely frighten'd on the day;

But there they linger'd on from week to week,
Haunted by ills of which 'tis hard to speak,

For they are many and vexatious all,
The very smallest—but then none were small.

"The roof uncivil in patches, gave the snow
Entrance within, and there were heaps below;

I pass'd a narrow region dark and cold,
The strait of stairs to that infectious hold;

And, when I enter'd, misery met my view
In every shape she wears, in every hue,

And the bleak icy blast across the dungeon flew:
There frown'd the ruin'd walls that once were white;

There gleam'd the panes that once admitted light;
There lay unsavory scraps of wretched food;

And there a measure, void of fuel, stood;
But who shall part by part describe the state

Of these, thus follow'd by relentless fate?
All, too, in winter, when the icy air

Breathed its bleak venom on the guilty pair.

"That man, that Cecil!—he was left, it seems,
Unnamed, unnoticed: farewell to his dreams!

Heirs made by law rejected him of course,
And left him neither refuge nor resource:—

Their father's? No: he was the harlot's son
Who wrong'd them, whom their duty bade them shun;

And they were duteous all, and he was all undone.

"Now the lost pair, whom better times had led
To part disputing, shared their sorrow's bed:

Their bed!—I shudder as I speak—and shared
Scraps to their hunger by the hungry spared."

"Man! my good Ellis! can you sigh?"—"I can:
In short, Sir Owen, I must feel as man;

And could you know the miseries they endured,
The poor, uncertain pittance they procur'd;

When, laid aside the needle and the pen,
Their sickness won the neighbors of their den,

Poor as they are, and they are passing poor,
To lend some aid to those who needed more

Then, too, an ague with the winter came,
And in this state—that wife I cannot name

Brought forth a famish'd child of suffering and of shame.

"This had you known, and traced them to this scene,
Where all was desolate, defiled, unclean,

A fireless room, and, where a fire had place,
The blast loud howling down the empty space,

You must have felt a part of the distress,
Forgot your wrongs, and made their suffering less!"

"Sought you them, Ellis, from the mean intent
To give them succor?"

"What indeed I meant
At first was vengeance; but I long pursued

The pair, and I at last their misery view'd
In that vile garret, which I cannot paint—

The sight was loathsome, and the smell was faint;
And there that wife,—whom I had loved so well,

And thought so happy, was condemn'd to dwell:
The gay, the grateful wife, whom I was glad

To see in dress beyond our station clad,
And to behold among our neighbors fine,

More than perhaps became a wife of mine;
And now among her neighbors to explore,

And see her poorest of the very poor!—
I would describe it, but I bore a part,

Nor can I since the feelings of the heart;
Yet memory since has aided me to trace

The horrid features of that dismal place.
There she reclined unmoved, her bosom bare

To her companion's unimpassion'd stare,
And my wild wonder:—Seat of virtue! chaste

As lovely once! O! how wert thou disgraced!
Upon that breast, by sordid rags defiled,

Lay the wan features of a famish'd child:—
That sin-born babe in utter misery laid,
Too feebly wretched e'en to cry for aid;

The ragged sheeting, o'er her person drawn,
Served for the dress that hunger placed in pawn.

"At the bed's feet the man reclined his frame:
Their chairs were peris'd to support the flame

That warm'd his aged limbs; and, sad to see,
That shook him fiercely as he gazed on me.

"I was confused in this unhappy view:
My wife! my friend! I could not think it true;

My children's mother,—my Alicia,—laid
On such a bed! so wretched,—so afraid!

And her gay, young seducer, in the guise
Of all we dread, abuse, defy, despise,

And all the fear and terror in his look,
Still more my mind to its foundation shook.

At last he spoke:—Long since I would have died,
But could not leave her, though for death I sigh'd,

And tried the poison'd cup, and dropt it as I tried.

She is a woman, and that famish'd thing
Makes her to life, with all its evils, cling:

Feed her, and let her breathe her last in peace,
And all my sufferings with your promise cease!"

Ghastly he smiled:—I knew not what I felt,
But my heart melted—hearts of flint would melt,

To see their anguish, penury, and shame,
How base, how low, how groveling they became:

I could not speak my purpose, but my eyes
And my expression bade the creature rise

Yet, O! that woman's look! my words are vain
Her mix'd and troubled feelings to explain;

True, there was shame and consciousness of fall,
But yet remembrance of my love withal,

And knowledge of that power which she would now recall.
But still the more that she to memory brought,

The greater anguish in my mind was wrought;
The more she tried to bring the past in view,

She greater horror on the present threw;
So that, for love or pity, terror thrill'd

My blood, and vile and odious thoughts instill'd.

This war within, these passions in their strife,
If thus protracted, had exhausted life;

But the strong view of these departed years
Caused a full burst of salutary tears,

And as I wept at large, and thought alone,
I felt my reason re-ascend her throne."

"My friend!" Sir Owen answer'd, "what became
Of your just anger?—when you saw their shame,

It was your triumph, and you should have shown
Strength, if not joy—their sufferings were their own."

"Alas, for them! their own in very deed!
And they of mercy had the greater need!

Their own by purchase, for their frailty paid,—
And wanted heaven's own justice, human aid?

And seeing this, could I beseech my God
For deeper misery, and a heavier rod?"

"But could you help them?"—"Think, Sir Owen, how
I saw them then—methinks I see them now!

She had not food, nor ought a mother needs,
Who for another life and dearer feeds:

I saw her speechless; on her wither'd breast
The wither'd child extended, but not prest,

Who sought, with moving lip and feeble cry,
Vain instinct! for the fount without supply.

Sure it was all a grievous, odious scene,
Where all was dismal, melancholy, mean,

Foul with compell'd neglect, unwholesome, and unclean;
That arm,—that eye,—the cold, the sunken cheek,—

Spoke all, Sir Owen—fiercely miseries speak!"

"And you relieved?"

"If hell's seducing crew
Had seen that sight, they must have pitied too."

"Revenge was thine,—thou hadst the power, the right,
To give it up was heaven's own act to slight."

"Tell me not, Sir, of rights, and wrongs, or powers!
I felt it written—Vengeance is not ours!"

"Well, Ellis, well!—I find these female foes,
Or good or ill, will murder our repose;

And we, when Satan tempts them, take the ctup,
The fruit of their foul sin, and drink it up:

But shall our pity all our claims remit,
And we the sinners of their guilt acquit?"

"And what, Sir Owen, will our vengeance do?
It follows us when we our foe pursue,

And, as we strike the blow, it smites the smiters too."

"What didst thou, man?"

"I brought them to a cot
Behind your larches,—a sequester'd spot,

Where dwells the woman: I believe her mind
Is now enlighten'd—I am sure resign'd:

She gave her infant, though with aching heart
And faltering spirit, to be nursed apart."

"And that vile scoundrel?"

"Nay, his name restore,
And call him Cecil,—for he is no more:

When my vain help was offer'd, he was past
All human aid, and shortly breathed his last;

But his heart open'd, and he lived to see
Guilt in himself, and find a friend in me.

Strange was their parting, parting on the day
I offer'd help, and took the man away,

Sure not to meet again, and not to live
And taste of joy—He feebly cried, 'Forgive!'

I have thy guilt, thou mine, but now adieu!
Tempters and tempted! what will thence ensue
I know not, dare not think!"—He said, and he withdrew."

"But, Ellis, tell me, didst thou thus desire
To heap upon their heads those coals of fire?"

"If fire to melt, that feeling is confest,—
If fire to shame, I let that question rest;
But if aught more the sacred words imply,
I know it not—no commentator I."

"Then did you freely from your soul forgive?"—

"Sure as I hope before my Judge to live,
Sure as I trust his mercy to receive,
Sure as his word I honor and believe,
Sure as the Saviour died upon the tree
For all who sin,—for that dear wretch and me,—
Whom never more on earth will I forsake or see."

Sir Owen softly to his bed adjourn'd,
Sir Owen quickly to his home return'd;
And all the way he meditating dwelt
On what this man in his affliction felt;
How he, resenting first, forbore, forgave,
His passion's lord, and not his anger's slave:
And as he rode he seem'd to fear the deed
Should not be done, and urged unwonted speed.

Arrived at home, he scorn'd the change to hide,
Nor would indulge a mean and selfish pride,
That would some little at a time recall
Th' avenging vow; he now was frankness all:
He saw his nephew, and with kindness spoke—
"Charles, I repent my purpose, and revoke;
Take her—I'm taught, and would I could repay
The generous teacher; hear me, and obey:
Bring me the dear coquette, and let me vow
On lips half perjured to be passive now:
Take her, and let me thank the powers divine
She was not stolen when her hand was mine,
Or when her heart—Her smiles I must forget,
She my revenge, and cancel either debt."

Here ends our tale, for who will doubt the bliss
Of ardent lovers in a case like this?
And if Sir Owen's was not half so strong,
It may, perchance, continue twice as long.

BOOK XIII.

DELAY HAS DANGER.

Morning Excursion—Lady at Silford, who?—Reflections on Delay—Cecilia and Henry—The Lover contrasted—Visit to the Patron—Whom he finds there—Fanny described—The yielding of Fanny—Delay—Resentment—Want of Resolution—Further Entanglement—Danger—How met—Conclusion.

THREE weeks had pass'd, and Richard rambles now
Far as the dinners of the day allow;
He rode to Farley Grange and Finley Mere,
That house so ancient, and that lake so clear:
He rode to Ripley through that river gay,
Where in the shallow stream the loaches play,
And stoney fragments stay the winding stream,
And gilded pebbles at the bottom gleam,
Giving their yellow surface to the sun,
And making proud the waters as they run:
It is a lovely place, and at the side
Rises a mountain-rock in rugged pride;
And in that rock are shapes of shells, and forms
Of creatures in old worlds, of nameless worms,
Whose generations lived and died ere man,
A worm of other class, to crawl began.

There is a town call'd Silford, where his steed
Our traveller rested—He the while would feed
His mind by walking to and fro, to meet,
He knew not what adventure, in the street:
A stranger there, but yet a window-view
Gave him a face that he conceived he knew;
He saw a tall, fair, lovely lady, dress'd
As one whom taste and wealth had jointly bless'd;
He gazed, but soon a footman at the door,
Thundering, alarm'd her, who was seen no more.

"This was the lady whom her lover bound
In solemn contract, and then proved unsound:
Of this affair I have a clouded view,
And should be glad to have it clear'd by you."

So Richard spake, and instant George replied,
"I had the story from the injured side,
But when resentment and regret were gone,
And pity (shaded by contempt) came on,
Fanny was the hero of my tale, but still
Was rather drawn by accident than will;
Some without meaning into guilt advance,
From want of guard, from vanity, from chance;
Man's weakness lies his more immediate pain,
A little respite from his fears to gain;
And takes the part that he would gladly fly,
If he had strength and courage to deny."

"But now my tale, and let the moral say,
When hope can sleep, there's Danger in Delay.
Not that for rashness, Richard, I would plead,
For unadvised alliance: No, indeed:
Think ere the contract—but, contracted, stand
No more debating, take the ready hand:
When hearts are willing, and when fears subside,
Trust not to time, but let the knot be tied;

For when a lover has no more to do,
He thinks in leisure, what shall I pursue?
And then who knows what objects come in view?
For when, assured, the man has nought to keep
His wishes warm and active, then they sleep:
Hopes die with fears; and then a man must lose
All the gay visions, and delicious views,
Once his mind's wealth! He travels at his ease,
Nor horrors now nor fairy-beauty sees;
When the kind goddess gives the wish'd assent,
No mortal business should the deed prevent;
But the blest youth should legal sanction seek
Ere yet th' assenting blush had fled the cheek.

"And—hear me, Richard,—man has reptile-pride
That often rises when his fears subside;
When, like a trader feeling rich, he now
Neglects his former smile, his humble bow,
And, conscious of his hoarded wealth, assumes
New airs, nor thinks how odious he becomes.

"There is a wandering, wavering train of thought
That something seeks where nothing should be sought,
And will a self-delighted spirit move
To dare the danger of pernicious love."

"First be it granted all was duly said
By the fond youth to the believing maid;
Let us suppose with many a sigh there came
The declaration of the deathless flame—
And so her answer—She was happy then,
Blest in herself, and did not think of men;
And with such comforts in her present state,
A wish to change it was to tempt her fate;
That she would not; but yet she would confess
With him she thought her hazard would be less;
Nay, more, she would esteem, she would regard express:
But to be brief—if he could wait and see
In a few years what his desires would be."

Henry for years read months, then weeks, nor found
The lady thought his judgment was unsound;
"For months read weeks," she read it to his praise,
And had some thoughts of changing it to days.

And here a short excursion let me make,
A lover tried, I think, for lover's sake;
And teach the meaning in a lady's mind
When you can none in her expressions find:
Words are design'd that meaning to convey,
But often *Yes* is hidden in a *Nay*!
And what the charmer wiles, some gentle hints betray.
Then, too, when ladies mean to yield at length,
They match their reasons with the lover's strength,
And, kindly cautious, will no force employ
But such as he can baffle or destroy.

As when heroic lovers beauty woo'd,
And were by magic's mighty art withstood,
The kind historian, for the dame afraid,
Gave to the faithful knight the stronger aid.
A downright *No!* would make a man despair,
Or leave for kinder nymph the cruel fair;
But *No!* because I'm very happy now,
"Because I dread th' irrevocable vow,
Because I fear papa will not approve,
Because I love not—No, I cannot love,
Because you men of Cupid make a jest,
Because—in short, a single life is best."

A *No!* when back'd by reasons of such force,
Invites approach, and will recede of course.

Ladies, like towns besieged, for honor's sake,
Will some defence or its appearance make;
On first approach there's much resistance made,
And conscious weakness hides in bold parade;
With lofty looks, and threat'ning stern and proud,
"Come if you dare," is said in language loud,
But if th' attack be made with care and skill,
"Come," says the yielding party, "if you will;"
Then each the other's valiant acts approve,
And twine their laurels in a wreath of love.

We now retrace our tale and forward go,—
Thus Henry rightly read Cecilia's *No!*
His prudent father, who had duly weigh'd,
And well approved the fortune of the maid,
Not much resisted, just enough to show
He knew his power, and would his son should know.

"Harry, I will, while I your bargain make,
That you a journey to our patron take:
I know her guardian; care will not become
A lad when courting; as you must be dumb,
You may be absent; I for you will speak,
And ask what you are not supposed to seek."

Then came the parting hour, and what arise
When lovers part! expressive looks and eyes,
Tender and tear-full,—many a fond adieu,
And many a call the sorrow to renew;
Sighs such as lovers only can explain,
And words that they might undertake in vain.

Cecilia liked it not; she had, in truth,
No mind to part with her enamour'd youth;
But thought it foolish thus themselves to cheat,
And part for nothing but again to meet.

Now Henry's father was a man whose heart
Took with his interest a decided part;
He knew his Lordship, and was known for acts
That I omit,—they were acknowledged facts;

An interest somewhere; I the place forget,
And the good deed—no matter—'twas a debt:
Thither must Henry, and in vain the maid
Express'd dissent—the father was obey'd.

But though the maid was by her fears assail'd,
Her reason rose against them, and prevail'd;
Fear saw him hunting, leaping, falling—led,
Maim'd and disfigured, groaning to his bed;
Saw him in perils, duels,—dying,—dead.
But Prudence answer'd, "Is not every maid
"With equal cause for him she loves afraid?"
And from her guarded mind Cecilia threw
The groundless terrors that will love pursue.

She had no doubts, and her reliance strong
Upon the honor that she would not wrong:
Firm in herself she doubted not the truth
Of him, the chosen, the selected youth;
Trust of herself a trust in him supplied,
And she believed him faithful, though untried:
On her he might depend, in him she would confide.

If some fond girl express'd a tender pain
Lost some fair rival should allure her again,
To such she answer'd, with a look severe,
"Can one you doubt be worthy of your fear?"

My Lord was kind,—a month had pass'd away,
And Henry stay'd,—he sometimes named a day;
But still my lord was kind, and Henry still must stay
His father's words to him were words of fate—
"Wait, 'tis your duty; 'tis my pleasure, wait!"
In all his walks, in hilly heath or wood,
Cecilia's form the pensive youth pursued;
In the gray morning, in the silent noon,
In the soft twilight, by the sober moon,
In those forsaken rooms, in that immense saloon;
And he, now fond of that seclusion grown,
There reads her letters, and there writes his own.

"Here none approach," said he, "to interfere,
But I can think of my Cecilia here!"

But there did come—and how it came to pass
Who will explain?—a mild and blue-eyed lass;
It was the work of accident, no doubt—
The cause unknown—we say, "as things fall out;"—
The damsel enter'd there, in wand'ring road about:
At first she saw not Henry; and she ran,
As from a ghost, when she beheld a man.

She was esteem'd a beauty through the hall,
And so admitted, with consent of all;
And, like a treasure, was her beauty kept
From every guest who in the mansion slept;
Whether as friends who join'd the nobler pair,
Or those invited by the steward there.

She was the daughter of a priest, whose life
Was brief and sad: he lost a darling wife,
And Fanny then her father, who could save
But a small portion; but his all he gave,
With the fair orphan, to a sister's care,
And her good spouse; they were the ruling pair—
Steward and steward's lady—o'er a tribe,
Each under each, whom I shall not describe.

This grave old couple, childless and alone,
Would, by their care, for Fanny's loss atone:
She had been taught in schools of honest fame;
And to the Hall, as to a home, she came,
My lord assenting: yet, as meet and right,
Fanny was held from every hero's sight,
Who might in youthful error cast his eyes
On one so gentle as a lawful prize,
On border land, whom, as their right or prey,
A youth from either side might bear away.
Some handsome lover of th' inferior class
Might as a wife approve the lovely lass;
Or some invader from the class above,
Who, more presuming, would his passion prove
By asking less—love only for his love.

This much experienced aunt her fear express'd,
And dread of old and young, of host and guest.
"Go not, my Fanny, in their way," she cried
"It is not right that virtue should be tried;
So, to be safe, be ever at my side."

She was not ever at that side; but still
Observed her precepts, and obey'd her will.

But in the morning's dawn and evening's gloom
She could not lock the damsel in her room;
And Fanny thought, "I will ascend these stairs
To see the chapel,—there are none at prayers;
None," she believed, "had yet to dress return'd,
By whom a timid girl might be discern'd!"
In her slow motion, looking, as she glides,
On pictures, busts, and what she met besides,
And speaking softly to herself, alone,
Or singing low in melancholy tone;
And thus she rambled through the still domain,
Room after room, again, and yet again.

But, to retrace our story, still we say,
To this saloon the maiden took her way.
Where she beheld our youth, and frighten'd ran,
And so their friendship in her fear began.

But dare she thither once again advance,
And still suppose the man will think it chance?
Nay, yet again, and what has chance to do
With this?—I know not: doubtless Fanny knew.

Now, of the meeting of a modest maid
And sober youth why need we be afraid?
And when a girl's amusements are so few
As Fanny's were, what would you have her do?
Reserved herself, a decent youth to find,
And just be civil, sociable, and kind,
And look together at the setting sun,
Then at each other—What the evil done?

Then Fanny took my little lord to play,
And bade him not intrude on Henry's way:
"O, he intrudes not!" said the youth, and grew
Fond of the child, and would amuse him too;
Would make such faces, and assume such looks—
He loved it better than his gayest books.

When man with man would an acquaintance seek,
He will his thoughts in chosen language speak;
And they converse on divers themes, to find
If they possess a corresponding mind;
But man with woman has foundation laid,
And built up friendship ere a word is said:
'Tis not with words that they their wishes tell,
But with a language answering quite as well;
And thus they find, when they begin to explore
Their way by speech, they knew it all before.

And now it chanced again the pair, when dark,
Met in their way, when wandering in the park;
Not in the common path, for so they might,
Without a wonder, wander day or night;
But, when in pathless ways their chance will bring
A musing pair, we do admire the thing.

The youth in meeting read the damsel's face,
As if he meant her inmost thoughts to trace;
On which her color changed, as if she meant
To give her aid, and help his kind intent.

Both smiled and parted, but they did not speak—
The smile implied, "O tell me what you seek."
They took their different ways with erring feet,
And met again, surprised that they could meet;
Then must they speak—and something of the air
Is always ready—"Tis extremely fair!"

"It was so pleasant!" Henry said; "the beam
Of that sweet light so brilliant on the stream;
And chiefly yonder, where that old cascade
Has for an age its simple music made;
All so delightful, soothing, and serene!
Do you not feel it? not enjoy the scene?
Something it has that words will not express,
But rather hide, and make th' enjoyment less:
'Tis what our souls conceive, 'tis what our hearts confess."

Poor Fanny's heart at these same words confess'd
How well he painted, and how rightly guess'd
And, while they stood admiring their retreat,
Henry found something like a mossy seat;
But Fanny sat not: no, she rather pray'd
That she might leave him, she was so afraid.

"Not, Sir, of you; your goodness I can trust,
But folks are so censorious and unjust,
They make no difference, they pay no regard
To our true meaning, which is very hard
And very cruel; great the pain it cost
To lose such pleasure, but it must be lost:
Did people know how free from thought of ill
One's meaning is, their malice would be still."

At this she wept; at least a glittering gem
Shone in each eye, and there was fire in them,
For as they fell, the sparkles, at his feet,
He felt emotions very warm and sweet.

A lovely creature! not more fair than good,
By all admired, by some, it seems, pursued,
Yet self-protected by her virtue's force
And conscious truth—What evil in discourse
With one so guarded, who is pleased to trust
Herself with me, reliance strong and just?"

Our lover then believed he must not seem
Cold to the maid who gave him her esteem;
Not manly this; Cecilia had his heart,
But it was lawful with his time to part;
It would be wrong in her to take amiss
A virtuous friendship for a girl like this;

False or disloyal he would never prove,
But kindness here took nothing from his love:
Soldiers to serve a foreign prince are known,
When not on present duty to their own;
So, though our bosom's queen we still prefer,
We are not always on our knees to her.

"Cecilia present, witness you fair moon,
And you bright orbs, that fate would change as soon
As my devotion; but the absent sun
Cheers us no longer when his course is run;
And then those starry twinklers may obtain
A little worship till he shines again."

The father still commanded "Wait awhile,"
And the son answered in submissive style,
Grieved, but obedient; and obedience teased
His lady's spirit more than grieving pleased:
That he should grieve in absence was most fit,
But not that he to absence should submit;
And in her letters might be traced reproof,
Distant indeed, but visible enough;
This should the wandering of his heart have stay'd;
Alas! the wanderer was the vainer made.

The parties daily met, as by consent,
And yet it always seem'd by accident;

Till in the nymph the shepherd had been blind
If he had fail'd to see a manner kind,
With what expressive look, that seem'd to say,
"You do not speak, and yet you see you may."

O! yes, he saw, and he resolved to fly,
And blamed his heart, unwilling to comply:
He sometimes wonder'd how it came to pass,
That he had all this freedom with the lass;
Reserved herself, with strict attention kept,
And care and vigilance that never slept:
"How is it thus that they a beauty trust
With me, who feel the confidence is just?
And they, too, feel it; yes, they may confide,"—
He said in folly, and he smiled in pride.

'Tis thus our secret passions work their way,
And the poor victims know not they obey.
Familiar now became the wandering pair,
And there was pride and joy in Fanny's air;
For though his silence did not please the maid,
She judged him only modest and afraid;
The gentle dames are ever pleased to find
Their lovers dreading they should prove unkind!
So, blind by hope, and pleased with prospects gay,
The generous beauty gave her heart away
Before he said, "I love!"—alas! he dared not say.

Cecilia yet was mistress of his mind,
But oft he wish'd her, like his Fanny, kind;
Her fondness sooth'd him, for the man was vain,
And he perceived that he could give her pain:
Cecilia liked not to profess her love,
But Fanny ever was the yielding dove;
Tender and trusting waiting for the word,
And then prepared to hail her bosom's lord.

Cecilia once her honest love avow'd,
To make him happy, not to make him proud;
But she would not, for every asking sigh,
Confess the flame that wak'd his vanity;
But this poor maiden, every day and hour,
Would, by fresh kindness, feed the growing power;
And he indulg'd, vain being! in the joy,
That he alone could raise it, or destroy;
A present good, from which he dared not fly,
Cecilia absent, and his Fanny by.

O! vain desire of youth, that in the hour
Of strong temptation, when he feels the power,
And knows how daily his desires increase,
Yet will he wait, and sacrifice his peace,
Will trust to chance to free him from the snare,
Of which, long since, his conscience said, beware!
Or look for strange deliverance from that ill,
That he might fly, could he command the will!
How can he freedom from the future seek,
Who feels already that he grows too weak?
And thus refuses to resist, till time
Removes the power, and makes the way for crime:

Yet thoughts he had, and he would think, "Forego
My dear Cecilia? not for kingdoms! No!
But may I, ought I not the friend to be
Of one who feels this fond regard for me?
I wrong no creature by a kindness lent
To one so gentle, mild, and innocent;
And for that fair one, whom I still adore,
By feeling thus I think of her the more!"
And not unlikely, for our thoughts will tend
To those whom we are conscious we offend.

Had Reason whisper'd, "Has Cecilia leave
Some gentle youth in friendship to receive,
And be to him the friend that you appear
To this soft girl?—would not some jealous fear
Proclaim your thoughts, that he approach'd too near?"

But Henry, blinded still, presumed to write
Of one in whom Cecilia would delight;
A mild and modest girl, a gentle friend,
If, as he hoped, her kindness would descend—
But what he fear'd to lose or hoped to gain
By writing thus, he had been ask'd in vain.

It was his purpose, every morn he rose,
The dangerous friendship he had made to close;
It was his torment nightly, ere he slept,
To feel his prudent purpose was not kept.

True, he has wonder'd why the timid maid
Meets him so often, and is not afraid;
And why that fierce dragon, fierce and keen,
Has never in their private walks been seen;
And often he has thought, "What can their silence mean?"

"They can have no design, or plot, or plan,—
In fact, I know not how the thing began,—
'Tis their dependence on my credit here,
And fear not, nor, in fact, have cause to fear."

But did that pair, who seem'd to think that all
Unwatch'd would wander and unguarded fall,
Did they permit a youth and maid to meet
Both unreproved? were they so indiscreet?

This sometimes enter'd Henry's mind, and then,
"Who shall account for women or for men?"
He said, "or who their secret thoughts explore?
Why do I vex me? I will think no more."

My Lord of late had said, in manner kind,
"My good friend Harry, do not think us blind!"
Letters had pass'd, though he had nothing seen
His careful father and my Lord between:
But to what purpose was to him unknown—
It might be borough business, or their own.

Fanny, it seem'd, was now no more in dread,
If one approach'd, she neither fear'd nor fled:
He mused on this—"But wherefore her alarm?
She knows me better, and she dreads no harm."

Something his father wrote that gave him pain:
"I know not, son, if you should yet remain;—
Be cautious, Harry, favors to procure
We strain a point, but we must first be sure:
Love is a folly,—that, indeed, is true,—
But something still is to our honor due,
So I must leave the thing to my good Lord and you."

But from Cecilia came remonstrance strong:
"You write too darkly, and you stay too long;
We hear reports; and, Henry,—mark me well,—
I heed not every tale that triflers tell;—
Be you no trifter; dare not to believe
That I am one whom words and vows deceive:
You know your heart, your hazard you will learn,
And this your trial—instantly return!"

"Unjust, injurious, jealous, cruel maid!
Am I a slave, of haughty words afraid?
Can she who thus commands expect to be obey'd?
O! how unlike this dear assenting soul,
Whose heart a man might at his will control!"

Uneasy, anxious, fill'd with self-reproof,
He now resolved to quit his patron's roof;
And then again his vacillating mind
To stay resolved, and that her pride should find:
Debating thus, his pen the lover took
And chose the words of anger and rebuke.

Again, yet once again, the conscious pair
Met, and "O, speak!" was Fanny's silent prayer;
And, "I must speak," said the embarrassed youth,
"Must save my honor, must confess the truth;
Then I must lose her; but, by slow degrees,
She will regain her peace, and I my ease."
Ah! foolish man! to virtue true nor vice,
He buys distress, and self-esteem the price;
And what his gain?—a tender smile and sigh
From a fond girl to feed his vanity.

Thus, every day they lived, and every time
They met, increased his anguish and his crime.
Still in their meetings they were oftentimes nigh
The darling time, and then past trembling by;
On those occasions Henry often tried
For the sad truth—and then his heart denied
The utterance due; thus daily he became
The prey of weakness, vanity, and shame.

But soon a day, that was their doubts to close,
On the fond maid and thoughtless youth arose.

Within the park, beside the bounding brook,
The social pair their usual ramble took;
And there the steward found them; they could trace
News in his look, and gladness in his face.

He was a man of riches, bluff and big,
With clean brown broad-cloth, and with white cut wig:
He bore a cane of price, with riband tied,
And a fat spaniel waddled at his side:
To every being whom he met he gave
His looks expressive; civil, gay, or grave,
But condescending all; and each declared
How much he govern'd, and how well he fared.

This great man bow'd, not humbly, but his bow
Appear'd familiar converse to allow:
The trembling Fanny, as he came in view,
Within the chestnut grove in fear withdrew;
While Henry wonder'd, not without a fear,
Of that which brought th' important man so near:
Doubt was dispersed by "My esteemed young man!"
As he with condescending grace began—

"Though you with youthful frankness nobly trust
Your Fanny's friends, and doubtless think them just,
Though you have not, with craving soul, applied
To us, and ask'd the fortune of your bride,
Be it our care that you shall not lament
That love has made you so improvident."

"An orphan maid—Your patience! you shall have
Your time to speak, I now attention crave;—
Fanny, dear girl! has in my spouse and me
Friends of a kind we wish our friends to be,
None of the poorest—nay, Sir, no reply,
You shall not need—and we are born to die:
And one yet crawls on earth, of whom, I say,
That what he has he cannot take away;
Her mother's father, one who has a store
Of this world's good, and always looks for more;
But, next his money, loves the girl at heart,
And she will have it when they come to part."

"Sir," said the youth, his terrors all awake,
"Hear me, I pray, I beg,—for mercy's sake!
Sir, were the secrets of my soul confess'd,
Would you admit the truths that I protest
Are such—your pardon!"

"Pardon! good, my friend,
I not alone will pardon, I commend:
Think you that I have no remembrance left
Of youthful love, and Cupid's cunning theft?
How nymphs will listen when their swains persuade,
How hearts are gain'd and how exchange is made?
Come Sir, your hand!"

"In mercy, hear me now!"
"I cannot hear you, time will not allow!"

You know my station, what on me depends,
For ever needed—but we part as friends;
And here comes one who will the whole explain,
My better self—and we shall meet again.”

“Sir, I entreat—

“Then be entreaty made

To her, a woman, one you may persuade;
A little teasing, but she will comply,
And loves her niece too fondly to deny.”

“O! he is mad, and miserable I!”

Exclaim’d the youth; “But let me now collect
My scatter’d thoughts, I something must effect.”
Hurrying she came—“Now, what has he confess’d,
Ere I could come to set your heart at rest?

What! he has grieved you! Yet he, too, approves
The thing! but man will tease you, if he loves.
But now for business: tell me, did you think
That we should always at your meetings wink?
Think you, you walk’d unseen? There are who bring
To me all secrets—O, you wicked thing!
Poor Fanny! now I think I see her blush,
All red and rosy, when I beat the bush;
And hide your secret, said I, if you dare!
So out it came, like an affrighten’d hare.

“Miss! said I, gravely, and the trembling maid
Pleased me at heart to see her so afraid;
And then she wept—now, do remember this,
Never to chide her when she does amiss;
For she is tender as the callow bird,
And cannot bear to have her temper stir’d;—
Fanny, I said, then whisper’d her the name,
And caused such looks—Yes, yours are just the same;
But hear my story—When your love was known,
For this our child—she is, in fact, our own—
Then, first debating, we agreed at last
To seek my lord, and tell him what had past.”

“To tell the Earl?”

“Yes, truly, and why not?

And then together we contrived our plot.”
“Eternal God!”

“Nay, be not so surprised,—

In all the matter we were well advised;
We saw my Lord, and Lady Jane was there,
And said to Johnson, “Johnson, take a chair!”
True, we are servants in a certain way,
But in the higher places so are they;
We are obey’d in ours, and they in theirs obey—
So Johnson bow’d, for that was right and fit,
And had no scruple with the Earl to sit—
Why look you so impatient while I tell
What they debated?—you must like it well.

“Let them go on, our gracious Earl began,
‘They will go off,’ said, joking, my good man:
‘Well!’ said the Countess,—she’s a lover’s friend,—
‘What if they do, they make the speedier end!’
But be you more composed, for that dear child
Is with her joy and apprehension wild:
O! we have watch’d you on from day to day,
‘There go the lovers!’ we were wont to say—
But why that look?”

“Dear Madam, I implore

A single moment!”

“I can give no more:

Here are your letters—that’s a female pen,
Said I to Fanny—‘tis his sister’s, then,’
Replied the maid.—No! never must you stray;
Or hide your wanderings, if you should, I pray;
I know, at least I fear, the best may err,
But keep the by-walks of your life from her:
That youth should stray is nothing to be told,
When they have sanction in the grave and old,
Who have no call to wander and transgress,
But very love of change and wantonness.

“I prattle idly, while your letters wait,
And then my Lord has much that he would state,
All good to you—do clear that clouded face,
And with good looks your lucky lot embrace.

“Now, mind that none with her divide your heart,
For she would die ere lose the smallest part;
And I rejoice that all has gone so well,
For who th’ effect of Johnson’s rage can tell?
He had his fears when you began to meet,
But I assured him there was no deceit:
He is a man who kindness will requite,
But injured once, revenge is his delight;
And he would spend the best of his estates
To ruin, goods and body, them he hates;
While he is kind enough when he approves
A deed that’s done, and serves the man he loves:
Come, read your letters—I must now be gone,
And think of matters that are coming on.”

Henry was lost,—his brain confused, his soul
Dismay’d and sunk, his thoughts beyond control;
Borne on by terror, he foreboding read
Cecilia’s letter! and his courage fled;
All was a gloomy, dark, and dreadful view,
He felt him guilty, but indignant too:—
And as he read, he felt the high disdain
Of injured men—“She may repent, in vain.”

Cecilia much had heard, and told him all
That scandal taught—“A servant at the Hall,
Or servant’s daughter, in the kitchen bred,
Whose father would not with her mother wed,
Was now his choice! a blushing fool, the toy,

Or the attempted, both of man and boy;
More than suspected, but without the wit
Or the allurements for such creatures fit;
Not virtuous though unfeeling, cold as ice,
And yet not chaste, the weeping food of vice;
Yielding, not tender; feeble, not refined;
Her form insipid, and without a mind.

“Rival! she spurn’d the word; but let him stay,
Warn’d as he was! beyond the present day,
What’er his patron might object to this,
The uncle-butler, or the weeping miss—
Let him from this one single day remain,
And then return! he would to her, in vain;
There let him then abide, to earn, or crave
Food undeserv’d! and be with slaves a slave.”

Had reason guided anger, govern’d zeal,
Or chosen words to make a lover feel,
She might have saved him—anger and abuse
Will but defiance and revenge produce.

“Unjust and cruel, insolent and proud!”

He said, indignant, and he spoke aloud.

“Butler! and servant! Gentlest of thy sex,
Thou wouldst not thus a man who loved thee vex;
Thou wouldst not thus to vile reproach give ear,
Nor thus enraged for fancied crimes appear;
I know not what, dear maid!—if thy soft smiles were here.”

And then, that instant, there appear’d the maid,
By his sad looks in her approach dismay’d;
Such timid sweetness, and so wrong’d, did more
Than all her pleading tenderness before.

In that weak moment, when disdain and pride
And fear and fondness, drew the man aside,
In this weak moment—“Wilt thou,” he began,
“Be mine?” and joy o’er all her features ran;
“I will!” she softly whisper’d; but the roar
Of cannon would not strike his spirit more;
E’en as his lips the lawless contract seal’d
He felt that conscience lost her seven-fold shield,
And honor fled; but still he spoke of love,
And all was joy in the consenting dove.

That evening all in fond discourse was spent,
When the sad lover to his chamber went,
To think on what had pass’d, to grieve and to repent:
Early he rose, and look’d with many a sigh
On the red light that fill’d the eastern sky;
Oft had he stood before, alert and gay,
To hail the glories of the new-born day;
But now dejected, languid, listless, low,
He saw the wind upon the water blow,
And the cold stream curl’d onward as the gale
From the pine-hill blew harshly down the dale;
On the right side the youth a wood survey’d,
With all its dark intensity of shade;

Where the rough wind alone was heard to move,
In this, the pause of nature and of love,
When now the young are rear’d, and when the old,
Lost to the tie, grow negligent and cold—
Far to the left he saw the huts of men,
Half hid in mist, that hung upon the fen;
Before him swallows, gathering for the sea,
Took their short flights, and twitter’d on the lea;
And near the bean-sheaf stood, the harvest done,
And slowly blacken’d in the sickly sun;
All these were sad in nature, or they took
Sadness from him, the likeness of his look,
And of his mind—he ponder’d for a while,
Then met his Fanny with a borrow’d smile.

Not much remain’d; for money and my Lord
Soon made the father of the youth accord;
His prudence half resisted, half obey’d,
And scorn kept still the guardians of the maid:
Cecilia never on the subject spoke,
She seem’d as one who from a dream awoke;
So all was peace, and soon the married pair
Fix’d with fair fortune in a mansion fair.

Five years had pass’d, and what was Henry then?
The most repining of repenting men;
With a fond, teasing, anxious wife, afraid
Of all attention to another paid;

Yet powerless she her husband to amuse,
Lives but t’ entreat, implore, resent, accuse;
Jealous and tender, conscious of defects,
She merits little, and yet much expects;
She looks for love that now she cannot see,
And sighs for joy that never more can be;
On his retirements her complaints intrude,
And fond reproach endears his solitude:

While he her weakness (once her kindness) sees,
And his affections in her languor freeze;
Regret, uncheck’d by hope, devours his mind,
He feels unhappy, and he grows unkind.
Fool! to be taken by a rosy cheek,
And eyes that cease to sparkle or to speak;
Fool! for this child my freedom to resign,
When one the glory of her sex was mine;
While from this burthen to my soul I hide,
To think what Fate has dealt, and what denied.

“What fiend possess’d me when I tamely gave
My forced assent to be an idiot’s slave?
Her beauty vanish’d, what for me remains?
Th’ eternal clinking of the galling chains:
Her person truly I may think my own,
Seen without pleasure, without triumph shown:
Doleful she sits, her children at her knees,

And gives up all her feeble powers to please;
Whom I, unmoved, or moved with scorn, behold,
Melting as ice, as rapid and as cold.”

Such was his fate, and he must yet endure
The self-contempt that no self-love can cure:
Some business call’d him to a wealthy town
When unprepared for more than Fortune’s frown;
There at a house he gave his luckless name,
The master absent, and Cecilia came;
Unhappy man! he could not, dared not speak,
But look’d around, as if retreat to seek:
This she allow’d not; but, with brow severe,
Ask’d him his business, sternly bent to hear;
He had no courage, but he view’d that face
As if he sought for sympathy and grace;
As if some kind returning thought to trace:
In vain; not long he waited, but with air,
That of all grace compell’d him to despair,
She rang the bell, and, when a servant came,
Left the repentant traitor to his shame;
But, going, spoke, “Attend this person out,
And if he speaks, hear what he comes about.”
Then, with cool courtesy, from the room withdrew,
That seem’d to say, “Unhappy man, adieu!”

Thus will it be when man permits a vice
First to invade his heart, and then entice;
When wishes vain and undefined arise,
And that weak heart deceive, seduce, surprise;
When evil Fortune works on Folly’s side,
And rash Resentment adds a spur to Pride;
Then life’s long troubles from those actions come,
In which a moment may decide our doom.

BOOK XIV.

THE NATURAL DEATH OF LOVE.

*The Rector of the Parish—His manner of teaching—Of living
—Richard’s Correspondence—The Letters received—Love
that survives Marriage—That dies in consequence—That is
permitted to die for Want of Care—Henry and Emma, a
Dialogue—Complaints on either Side—And Replies—Mutual
Accusation—Defence of acknowledged Error—Means
of restoring Happiness—The one to be adopted.*

RICHARD one month had with his Brother been,
And had his guests, his friends, his favorites seen;
Had heard the Rector, who with decent force,
But not of action, aided his discourse:
“A moral teacher!” some, contemptuously, cried;
He smiled, but nothing of the fact denied,
Nor, save by his fair life, to charge so strong replied.
Still, though he bade them not on ought rely
That was their own, but all their worth deny,
They call’d his pure advice his cold morality;
And though he felt that earnestness and zeal,
That made some portion of his hearers feel,
Nay, though he loved the minds of men to lead
To the great points that form the Christian’s creed,
Still he offend’d, for he would discuss
Points that to him seem’d requisite for us;
And urge his flock to virtue, though he knew
The very heathen taught the virtues too:
Nor was this moral minister afraid
To ask of inspiration’s self the aid
Of truths by him so sturdily maintain’d;
That some confusion in the parish reign’d;
“Heathens,” they said, “can tell us right from wrong,
But to a Christian higher points belong.”
Yet Jacques proceeded, void of fear and shame,
In his old method, and obtain’d the name
Of *Moral Preacher*—yet they all agreed,
Whatever error had defiled his creed,
His life was pure, and him they could commend,
Not as their guide, indeed, but as their friend:
Truth, justice, pity, and a love of peace,
Were his—but there must approbation cease;
He either did not, or he would not see,
That if he meant a favorite priest to be
He must not show, but learn of them the way
To truth—he must not dictate, but obey:
They wish’d him not to bring them further light,
But to convince them that they now were right,
And to assert that justice will condemn
All who presumed to disagree with them:
In this he fail’d; and his the greater blame,
For he persisted, void of fear or shame.

His Richard heard, and by his friendly aid
Were pleasant views observed and visits paid;
He to peculiar people found his way,
And had his question answer’d, “Who are they?”
Twice in the week came letters, and delight
Beam’d in the eye of Richard at the sight;
Letters of love, all full and running o’er,
The paper fill’d till it could hold no more;
Cross’d with discolored ink, the doublings full,
No fear that love should find abundance dull;
Love reads unsated all that love inspires,
When most indulged, indulgence still requires;
Looks what the corners, what the crossings tell,
And lifts each folding for a fond farewell.

George saw and smiled—“To lovers we allow
All this o’erflowing, but a husband thou!
A father too; can time create no change?
Married, and still so foolish?—very strange!
What of this wife or mistress is the art?”
The simple truth, my Brother, to impart,
Her heart, where’er she writes, feels writing to a heart.”

"Fortune, dear Richard, is thy friend—a wife
Like thine must soften every care of life,
And all its woes—I know a pair, whose lives
Run in the common track of men and wives;
And half their work, at least, this pair would give
Could they like thee and thy Matilda live.
"They were, as lovers, of the fondest kind,
With no defects in manner or in mind;
In habit, temper, prudence, they were those
Whom, as examples, I could once propose;
Now this, when married, you no longer trace,
But discontent and sorrow in the place:
Their pictures, taken as the pair I saw
In a late contest, I have tried to draw;
'Tis but a sketch, and at my idle time
I put my couple in the garb of rhyme:
Thou art a critic of the milder sort,
And thou wilt judge with favor my report.
Let me premise, twelve months have flown away,
Swiftly or sadly, since the happy day.
"Let us suppose the couple left to spend
Some hours without engagement or a friend;
And be it likewise on our mind impress'd,
They pass for persons happy and at rest;
Their love by Hymen crown'd, and all their prospects bless'd."

"Love has slow death and sudden: wretches prove
That fate severe—the sudden death of love;
It is as if, on day serenely bright,
Came with its horrors instantaneous night;
Others there are with whom love dies away
In gradual waste and unperceived decay;
Such is that death of love that nature finds
Most fitted for the use of common minds,
The natural death; but doubtless there are some
Who struggle hard when they perceive it come;
Loth to be loved no longer, loth to prove
To the once dear that they no longer love;
And some with not successful arts will strive
To keep the weakening, fluttering flame alive.

"But see my verse; in this I try to paint
The passion failing, fading to complaint,
The gathering grief for joys remember'd yet,
The vain remonstrance, and the weak regret:
First speaks the wife in sorrow, she is grieved
'T admit the truth, and would be still deceived."

HENRY AND EMMA.

E. Well, my good sir, I shall contend no more;
But, O! the vows you made, the oaths you swore—

H. To love you always—I confess it true;
And do I not? If not, what can I do?
Moreover think what you yourself profess'd,
And then the subject may for ever rest.

E. Yes, sir, obedience I profess'd; I know
My debt, and wish to pay you all I owe,
Pay without murmur; but that vow was made
To you, who said it never should be paid:
Now truly tell me why you took such care
To make me err? I ask'd you not to swear,
But rather hoped you would my mind direct,
And say, when married, what you would expect.

You may remember—it is not so long
Since you affirm'd that I could not be wrong:
I told you then—your recollect, I told
The very truth—that humor would not hold;
Not that I thought, or ever could suppose,
The mighty raptures were so soon to close—
Poetic flights of love all sunk in prose.

Do you remember how you used to hang
Upon my looks? your transports when I sang?
I play'd—you melted into tears; I moved—
Voice, words, and motion, how you all approved;
A time when Emma reign'd, a time when Henry loved:
You recollect?

H. Yes, surely; and then why
These needless truths? do I the facts deny?
For this remonstrance I can see no need,
Or this impatience—if you do, proceed.

E. O! that is now so cool, and with a smile
That sharpens insult—I detest the style;
And, now I talk of styles, with what delight
You read my lines—I then, it seems, could write:
In short, when I was present, you could see
But one dear object, and you lived for me;
And now, sir, what your pleasure? Let me dress,
Sing, speak, or write, and you your sense express
Of my poor taste—my words are not correct;
In all I do is failing or defect—
Some error you will seek, some blunder will detect;
And what can such dissatisfaction prove?
I tell you, Henry, you have ceased to love.

H. I own it not; but if a truth it be,
It is the fault of nature, not of me.
Remember you, my love, the fairy tale,
Where the young pairs were spell-bound in the vale?
When all around them gay or glorious seem'd,
And of bright views and ceaseless joys they dream'd;
Young love and infant life no more could give—
They said but half, when they exclaim'd, "We live!"
All was so light, so lovely, so serene,
And not a trouble to be heard or seen;

Till, melting into truth, the vision fled,
And there came miry roads and thorny ways instead.

Such was our fate, my charmer! we were found
A wandering pair, by roguish Cupid bound;
All that I saw was gilded to inspire
Grand views of bliss, and wake intense desire
Of joys that never pall, of flights that never tire;
There was that purple light of love, that bloom,
That ardent passions in their growth assume
That pure enjoyment of the soul—O! weak
Are words such loves and glowing thoughts to speak!
I sought to praise thee, and I felt disdain
Of my own effort; all attempts were vain.

Nor they alone were charming; by that light
All loved of thee grew lovely in my sight;
Sweet influence not its own in every place
Was found, and there was found in all things grace;
Thy shrubs and plants were seen new bloom to bear,
Not the Arabian sweets so fragrant were,
Nor Eden's self, if aught with Eden might compare.

You went the church-way walk, you reach'd the farm,
And gave the grass and babbling springs a charm;
Crop, whom you rode,—sad rider though you be,—
Thenceforth was more than Pegasus to me:
Have I not wood's your snarling cur to bend
To me the paw and greeting of a friend?
And all his surly ugliness forgive,
Because, like me, he was my Emma's slave?
Think you, thus charm'd, I would of the spell revoke?
Alas! my love, we married, and it broke!

Yet no deceit or falsehood stain'd my breast,
What I asserted might a saint attest;
Fair, dear, and good thou wert, nay, fairest, dearest, best:
Nor shame, nor guilt, nor falsehood I avow,
But 'tis by heaven's own light I see thee now;
And if that light will all those glories chase,
'Tis not my wish that will the good replace.

E. O! sir, this boyish tale is mighty well,
But 'twas your falsehood that destroy'd the spell:
Speak not of nature, 'tis an evil mind
That makes you to accustom'd beauties blind;
You seek the faults yourself, and then complain you find.

H. I sought them not; but, madam, 'tis in vain
The course of love and nature to restrain;
Lo! when the buds expand, the leaves are green,
Then the first opening of the flower is seen;
Then comes the honied breath and rosy smile,
That with their sweets the willing sense beguile;
But, as we look, and love, and taste, and praise,
And the fruit grows, the charming flower decays;
Till all is gather'd, and the wintry blast
Moans o'er the place of love and pleasure past.

So 'tis with beauty,—such the opening grace
And dawn of glory in the youthful face;
Then are the charms unfolded to the sight,
Then all is loveliness and all delight;
The nuptial tie succeeds, the genial hour,
And, lo! the falling off of beauty's flower;
So, through all nature is the progress made,—
The bud, the bloom, the fruit,—and then we fade.
Then sigh no more,—we might as well retain
The year's gay prime as bid that love remain,
That fond, delusive, happy, transient spell,
That hides us from a world wherein we dwell,
And forms and fits us for that fairy ground,
Where charming dreams and gay conceits abound;
Till comes at length 'th' awakening strife and care,
That we, as tried and toiling men, must share.

E. O! sir, I must not think that heaven approves
Ungrateful man or unrequited loves;
Nor that we less are fitted for our parts
By having tender souls and feeling hearts.

H. Come, my dear friend, and let us not refuse
The good we have, by grief for that we lose;
But let us both the very truth confess;
This must relieve the ill, and may redress.

E. O! much I fear! I practised no deceit,
Such as I am I saw you at my feet;
If for a goddess you a girl would take,
'Tis you yourself the disappointment make.

H. And I alone?—O! Emma, when I pray'd
For grace from thee, transported and afraid,
Now rais'd to rapture, now to terror doom'd,
Was not the goddess by the girl assumed?
Did not my Emma use her skill to hide—
Let us be frank—her weakness and her pride?
Did she not all her sex's arts pursue,
To bring the angel forward to my view?
Was not the rising anger oft suppress'd?
Was not the waking passion hush'd to rest?
And when so mildly sweet you look'd and spoke,
Did not the woman deign to wear a cloak?
A cloak she wore, or, though not clear my sight,
I might have seen her—Think you not I might?

E. O! this is glorious!—while your passion lives,
To the loved maid a robe of grace it gives;
And then, unjust! beholds her with surprise
Unrobed, ungracious, when the passion dies.

H. For this, my Emma, I to Heaven appeal,
I felt entirely what I seem'd to feel;
Thou wert all precious in my sight, to me
The being angels are supposed to be;

And am I now of my deception told,
Because I'm doom'd a woman to behold?

E. Sir! in few words I would a question ask
Mean these reproaches that I wore a mask?
Mean you that I by art or caution tried
To show a virtue, or a fault to hide?

H. I will obey you—When you seem'd to feel
Those books we read, and praised them with such zeal,
Approving all that certain friends approved,
Was it the pages or the praise you loved?
Nay, do not frown—I much rejoiced to find
Such early judgment in such gentle mind;
But, since we married, have you deign'd to look
On the grave subjects of one favorite book?
Or have the once-applauded pages power
T' engage their warm approver for an hour?

Nay, hear me further—When we view'd that dell,
Where lie those ruins—you must know it well—
When that worn pediment your walk delay'd,
And the stream gushing through the arch decay'd;
When at the venerable pile you stood,
Till the does ventured on our solitude,
We were so still! before the growing day
Call'd us reluctant from our seat away—
Tell me, was all the feeling you express'd
The genuine feeling of my Emma's breast?
Or was it borrow'd, that her faithful slave
The higher notion of her taste might have?
So may I judge, for of that lovely scene
The married Emma has no witness been;
No more beheld that water, falling, flow
Through the green fern that there delights to grow.

Once more permit me—Well, I know, you feel
For suffering men, and would their sufferings heal,
But when at certain huts you chose to call,
At certain seasons, was compassion all?
I there beheld thee, to the wretched dear
As angels to expiring saints appear.

When whispering hope—I saw an infant press'd
And hush'd to slumber on my Emma's breast!
Hush'd! be each rude suggestion!—Well I know,
With a free hand your bounty you bestow;
And to these objects frequent comforts send,
But still they see not now their pitying friend.

A merchant, Emma, when his wealth he states,
Though rich, is faulty if he over-ates
His real store; and, gaining greater trust
For the deception, should we deem him just?
If in your singleness of heart you hide
No flaw or frailty, when your veil is tried,
And time has drawn aside the truth of love,
We may be sorry, but we must approve;
The fancied charms no more our praise compel,
But doubly shines the worth that stands so well.

E. O! precious are you all, and prizes too,
Or could we take such guilty pains for you?
Believe it not—As long as passion lasts,
A charm about the chosen maid it casts;
And the poor girl has little more to do
Than just to keep in sight as you pursue:
Chance to a ruin leads her, you behold,
And straight the angel of her taste is told;
Chance to a cottage leads you, and you trace
A virtuous pity in the angel's face;
She reads a work you chance to recommend,
And likes it well—at least, she likes the friend;
But when it chances this no more is done,
She has not left one virtue—No! not one!

But be it said, good sir, we use such art,
Is it not done to hold a fickle heart,
And fix a roving eye? Is that design
Shameful or wicked that would keep you mine?
If I confess the art, I would proceed
To say of such that every maid has need.
Then when you flatter—in your language—praise,
In our own view you must our value raise;
And must we not, to this mistaken man,
Appear as like his picture as we can?
If you will call—nay, treat us as divine,
Must we not something to your thoughts incline
If men of sense will worship whom they love
Think you the idol will the error prove?
What! show him all her glory in pretence,
And make an idiot of this man of sense?

Then, too, suppose we should his praise refuse,
And clear his mind, we may our lover lose;
In fact, you make us more than nature makes,
And we, no doubt, consent to your mistakes
You will, we know, until the frenzy cools,
Enjoy the transient paradise of fools;
But fancy fled, you quit the blissful state,
And truth for ever bars the golden gate.

H. True! but how ill each other to upbraid,
'Tis not our fault that we no longer staid;
No sudden fate our lingering love suppress'd,
It died an easy death, and calmly sank to rest:
To either sex is the delusion lent,
And when it fails us, we should rest content,
'Tis cruel to reproach, when bootless to repent.

E. Then wise the lovers who consent to wait,
And always lingering never try the state;
But hurried on, by what they call their pain
And their bliss, no longer they refrain;

To ease that pain, to lose that bliss, they run
To the church magi, and the thing is done;
A spell is utter'd, and a ring applied,
And forth they walk a bridegroom and a bride,
To find this counter-charm, this marriage rite
Has put their pleasant fallacies to flight!
But tell me, Henry, should we truly strive,
May we not bid the happy dream revive?

H. Alas! they say when weakness or when vice
Expels a foolish pair from Paradise,
The guardian power to prayer has no regard,
The knowledge once obtain'd the gate is barr'd;
Or could we enter we could still repine,
Unless we could the knowledge too resign.
Yet let us calmly view our present fate,
And make a humbler Eden of our state;
With this advantage, that what now we gain,
Experience gives, and prudence will retain.

E. Ah! much I doubt—when you in fury broke
That lovely vase by one impassion'd stroke,
And thousand china-fragments met my sight,
Till rising anger put my grief to flight;
As well might you the beauteous jar repiece,
As joy renew and bid vexation cease.

H. Why then 'tis wisdom, Emma, not to keep
These griefs in memory; they had better sleep.
There was a time when this heaven-guarded isle,
Whose valleys flourish—nay, whose mountains smile,
Was sterile, wild, deform'd, and beings rude
Creatures scarce wilder than themselves pursued;
The sea was heard around a waste to howl,
The night-wolf answer'd to the howling owl,
And all was wretched—Yet who now surveys
The land, withholds his wonder and his praise?
Come let us try and make our moral view
Improve like this—this have we power to do.

E. O! I'll be all forgetful, deaf and dumb,
And all you wish, to have these changes come.

H. And come they may, if not as heretofore,
We cannot all the lovely vase restore;
What we behold in Love's perspective glass
Has pass'd away—one sigh! and let it pass—
It was a blissful vision, and it fled,
And we must get some actual good instead:
Of good and evil that we daily find,
That we must love, that banish from the mind;
The food of Love, that food on which he thrives,
To find must be the business of our lives;
And when we know what Love delights to see,
We must his guardians and providers be.
As careful peasants, with incessant toil,
Bring earth to vines in bare and rocky soil,
And, as they raise with care each scanty heap,
Think of the purple clusters they shall reap;
So those accretions to the mind we'll bring,
Whence fond regard and just esteem will spring;
Then, though we backward look with some regret
On those first joys, we shall be happy yet.
Each on the other must in all depend,
The kind adviser, the unfeeling friend;
Through the rough world we must each other aid,
Leading and led, obeying and obey'd;
Favor'd and favoring, eager to believe
What should be truth—inwilling to perceive
What might offend—determined to remove
What has offended; wisely to improve
What pleases yet, and guard returning love.
Nor doubt my Emma, but in many an hour
Fancy, who sleeps, shall wake with all her power;
And we shall pass—though not perhaps remain—
To fairy-land, and feel its charms again.

BOOK XV.

GREYNA GREEN.

Richard meets an Acquaintance of his Youth—The Kind of Meeting—His School—The Doctor Sidmere and his Family—Belwood, a Pupil—The Doctor's Opinion of him—The Opinion of his Wife—and of his Daughter—Consultation—The Lovers—Flight to Greytna Green—Return no more—The Doctor and his Lady—Belwood and his Wife—The Doctor reflects—Goes to his Son-in-law—His Reception and Return

"I MET," said Richard, when return'd to dine,
"In my excursion, with a friend of mine;
Friend! I mistake,—but yet I knew him well,
Ours was the village where he came to dwell;
He was an orphan born to wealth, and then
Placed in the guardian-care of cautious men;
When our good parent, who was kindness all,
Fed and caress'd him when he chose to call;
And this he loved, for he was always one
For whom some pleasant service must be done,
Or he was sullen—He would come and play
At his own time, and at his pleasure stay;
But our kind parent soothed him as a boy
Without a friend; she loved he should enjoy
A day of ease, and strove to give his mind employ
She had but seldom the desired success,
And therefore parting troubled her the less;
Two years he there remain'd, then went his way,
I think to school, and him I met to-day.
I heard his name, or he had pass'd unknown,
And, without scruple, I divulged my own;

His words were civil, but not much express'd,
"Yes! he had heard I was my Brother's guest;
Then would explain, what was not plain to me,
Why he could not a social neighbor be:
He envied you, he said, your quiet life,
And me a loving and contented wife;
You, as unfetter'd by domestic bond,
Me, as a husband and a father fond:
I was about to speak, when to the right
The road then turn'd, and lo! his house in sight.

"Adieu!" he said, nor gave a word or sign
Of invitation—yonder house is mine;
Your Brother's I prefer, if I might choose—
But, my dear Sir, you have no time to lose."
"Say, is he poor? or has he fits of spleen?
Or is he melancholy, moped, or mean?
So cold, so distant—I bestow'd some pains
Upon the fever in my Irish veins."

"Well, Richard, let your native wrath be tamed,
The man has half the evils you have named;
He is not poor, indeed, nor is he free
From all the gloom and care of poverty."
"But is he married?"—"Hush! the bell, my friend;
That business done, we will to his attend:
And, o'er our wine engaged, and at our ease,
We may discourse of Belwood's miseries;
Not that his sufferings please me—No, indeed;
But I from such am happy to be freed."

Their speech, of course, to this misfortune led,
A weak young man improvidently wed.

"Weak," answer'd Richard; "but we do him wrong
To say that his affection was not strong."

"That we may doubt," said George; "in men so weak
You may in vain the strong affections seek;
They have strong appetites; a fool will eat
As long as food is to his palate sweet;
His rule is not what sober nature needs,
But what the palate covets as he feels;
He has the passions, anger, envy, fear,
As storm is angry, and as frost severe;
Uncheck'd, he still retains what nature gave
And has what creatures of the forest have.

"Weak boys, indulged by parents just as weak,
Will with much force of their affection speak;
But let mamma th' accustom'd sweets withhold,
And the fond boys grow insolent and cold.

"Weak men profess to love, and while untired
May woo with warmth, and grieve to be denied;
But this is selfish ardor,—all the zeal
Of their pursuit is from the wish they feel
For self-indulgence—When do they deny
Themselves? and when the favorite object fly?
Or, for that object's sake, with her requests comply?
Their sickly love is fed with hopes of joy,
Repulses damp it, and delays destroy;
Love, that to virtuous acts will some excite,
In others but provokes an appetite;
In better minds, when love possession takes,
And meets with peril, he the reason shakes;
But these weak natures, when they love profess,
Never regard their small concerns the less.
"That true and genuine love has Quixote-flights
May be allow'd—in vision it delights;
But in its loftiest flight, its wildest dream,
Has something in it that commands esteem;
But this poor love to no such region soars,
But Sancho-like, its selfish lust deplores;
Of its own merit and its service speaks,
And full reward for all its duty seeks."

"When a rich boy, with all the pride of youth,
Weds a poor beauty, will you doubt his truth?
Such love is tried—it indiscreet may be,
But must be generous."

"That I do not see;
Just at this time the balance of the mind
Is this or that way by the weights inclined;
In this scale beauty, wealth in that abides,
In dubious balance, till the last subsidies;
Things are not poised in just the equal state,
That the ass stands stock-still in the debate;
Though when deciding he may slowly pass
And long for both—the nature of the ass;
'Tis but an impulse that he must obey
When he resigns one bundle of the hay."

Take your friend Belwood, whom his guardians sent
To Doctor Sidmere—full of dread he went;
Doctor they call'd him—he was not of us,
And where he was—we need not now discuss:
He kept a school, he had a daughter fair,
He said, as angels,—say, as women are.

Clara, this beauty, had a figure light,
Her face was handsome, and her eyes were bright;
Her voice was music, not by anger raised;
And sweet her dimple, either pleased or prais'd;
All round the village was her flame allow'd,
She was its pride, and not a little proud.

The ruling thought that sway'd her father's mind
Was this—I am for dignity design'd;
Riches he rather as a mean approved,
Yet sought them early, and in seeking loved;
For this he early made the marriage vow,
But fail'd to gain—I recollect not how;

For this his lady had his wrath incur'd,
But that her feelings seldom could be stirr'd;
To his fair daughter, famed as well as fair,
He look'd, and found his consolation there.

The Doctor taught of youth some half a score,
Well-born and wealthy—He would take no more;
His wife, when peevish, told him, "Yes! and glad!"—
It might be so—no more were to be had:
Belwood, it seems, for college was design'd,
But for more study he was not inclined;
He thought of laboring there with much delay,
And motives mix'd here urg'd the long delay.
He now on manhood verged, at least began
To talk as he supposed became a man.

"Whether he chose the college or the school
Was his own act, and that should no man rule;
He had his reasons for the step he took,
Did they suppose he stay'd to read his book?"

Hopeless, the Doctor said, "This boy is one
With whom I fear there's nothing to be done."

His wife replied, who more had guess'd or knew,
"You only mean there's nothing he can do;
Ev'n there you err, unless you mean indeed
That the poor lad can neither think nor read."

"What credit can I by such dunces obtain?"—"Credit? I know not—you may something gain;
'Tis true he has no passion for his books,
But none can closer study Clara's looks;
And who controls him? now his father's gone,
There's not a creature cares about the son.
If he be brought to ask your daughter's hand,
All that he has will be at her command;
And who is she? and whom does she obey?
Where is the wrong, and what the danger, pray?
Becoming guide to one who guidance needs
Is merit surely—If the thing succeeds,
Cannot you always keep him at your side,
And be his honor'd guardian and his guide?
And cannot I my pretty Clara rule?
Is not this better than a noisy school?"

The Doctor thought and mused, he felt and fear'd,
Wish'd it to be—then wish'd he had not heard;
But he was angry—that at least was right,
And gave him credit in his lady's sight:
Then, milder grown, yet something still severe,
He said, "Consider, Madam, think and fear;
But, ere they parted, softening to a smile,
"Farewell!" said he,—"I'll think myself awhile."

James and his Clara had, with many a pause
And many a doubt, infringed the Doctor's laws;
At first with terror, and with eye's turn'd round
On every side for fear they should be found:
In the long passage, and without the gate,
They met, and talk'd of love and his estate;
Sweet little notes, and full of hope, were laid
Where they were found by the attentive maid;
And these she answer'd kindly as she could,
But still "I dare not" waited on "I would."
Her fears and wishes she in part confess'd,
Her thoughts and views she carefully suppress'd;
Her Jimmy said at length, "He did not heed
His guardian's anger—What was he, indeed?
A tradesman once, and had his fortune gain'd
In that low way,—such anger he disdain'd—
He loved her pretty looks, her eyes of blue,
Her auburn-braid, and lips that shone like dew;
And did she think her Jimmy stay'd at school
To study Greek?—What take him for a fool?
Not he, by Jove! for what he had to seek
He would in English ask her, not in Greek;
Will you be mine? are all your scruples gone?
Then let's be off—I've that will take us on."
'Twas true; the clerk of an attorney there
Had found a Jew,—the Jew supplied the heir.

Yet had he fears—"My guardians may condemn
The choice I make—but what is that to them?
The more they strive my pleasure to restrain
The less they'll find they're likely to obtain
For when they work one to a proper cue,
What they forbid one takes delight to do."

Clara exulted—now the day would come
Belwood must take her in her carriage home;
"Then I shall hear what envy will remark
When I shall sport the ponies in the Park;
When my friend Jane will meet me at the ball,
And see me taken out the first of all;
I see her looks when she beholds the men
All crowd about me—she will simmer then,
And cry with her affected air and voice,
"O! my sweet Clara, how do I rejoice
At your good fortune!"—"Thank you, dear," say I;
"But some there are that could for envy die."

Mamma look'd on with thoughts to these allied,
She felt the pleasure of reflected pride;
She should respect in Clara's honor find—
But she to Clara's secret thoughts was blind;
O! when we thus design, we do but spread
Nets for our feet, and to our toils are led:
Those whom we think we rule their virtues attain,
And we partake the guilt without the gain.

The Doctor long had thought, till he became
A victim both to avarice and shame;
From his importance, every eye was placed
On his designs—How dreadful if disgrac'd!

"O! that unknown to him the pair had flown
To that same Green, the project all their own!
And should they now be guilty of the act,
Am not I free from knowledge of the fact?
Will they not, if they will?" 'Tis thus we meet
The check of conscience, and our guide defeat.
This friend, this spy, this counsellor at rest,
More pleasing views were to the mind address'd.
The mischief done, he would be much displeased,
For weeks, nay, months, and slowly be appeased;—
Yet of this anger if they felt the dread,
Perhaps they dare not steal away to wed;
And if on hints of mercy they should go,
He stood committed—it must not be so.
In this dilemma either horn was hard,—
Best to seem careless, then, and off one's guard;
And, lest their terror should their flight prevent,
His wife might argue—fathers will relent
On such occasions—and that she should share
The guilt and censure was her proper care.

"Suppose them wed," said he, "and at my feet,
I must exclaim that instant—Vile deceit!
Then will my daughter, weeping, while they kneel,
For its own Clara beg my heart may feel:
At last, but slowly, I may all forgive,
And their adviser and director live."

When wishes only weak the heart surprise,
Heaven, in its mercy, the fond prayer denies;
But when our wishes are both base and weak,
Heaven, in its justice, gives us what we seek.

All pass'd that was expected, all prepared
To share the comfort—What the comfort shared?

The married pair, on their return, agreed
That they from school were now completely freed;
Were man and wife, and to their mansion now
Should boldly drive, and their intents avow:
The acting guardian in the mansion reign'd,
And, thither driving, they their will explain'd:
The man awhile discoursed in language high,
The ward was sullen and made brief reply;
Till, when he saw th' opposing strength decline,
He bravely utter'd—"Sir, the house is mine!"
And, like a lion, lash'd by self-rebuke,
His own defence he bravely undertook.

"Well! be it right or wrong, the thing is past;
You cannot hinder what is tight and fast:
The church has tied us; we are hither come
To our own place, and you must make us room."

The man reflected—"You deserve, I know,
Foolish young man! what fortune will bestow:
No punishment from me your actions need,
Whose pains will shortly to your fault succeed."

James was quite angry, wondering what was meant
By such expressions—Why should he repent?
New trial came—The wife conceived it right
To see her parents; "So," he said, "she might,
If she had any fancy for a jail,
But upon him no creature should prevail;
No! he would never be again the fool
To go and starve, or study at a school!"

"O! but to see her parents!"—"Well! the sight
Might give her pleasure—very like it might,
And she might go; but to his house restored,
He would not now be catechised and bored."

It was her duty—"Well!" said he again,
"There you may go—and there you may remain!"

Already this?—Even so: he heard it said
How rash and heedless was the part he play'd;
For love of money in his spirit dwelt,
And there repentance was intensely felt:
His guardian told him he had bought a toy
At tenfold price, and bargain'd like a boy:
Angry at truth, and wrought to fierce disdain,
He swore his loss should be no woman's gain;
His table she might share, his name she must,
But if aught more—she gets it upon trust.

For a few weeks his pride her face display'd—
He then began to thwart her, and upbraid;
He grew imperious, insolent, and loud—
His blinded weakness made his folly proud;
He would be master,—she had no pretence
To counsel him, as if he wanted sense;
He must inform her she already cost
More than her worth, and more should not be lost;
But still concluding, "if your will be so
That you must see the old ones, do it—go!"
Some weeks the Doctor waited, and the while
His lady preach'd in no consoling style;
At last she preach'd that rustic had convey'd
Their child to prison—yes, she was afraid,
There to remain in that old hall alone
With the vile heads of stags, and floors of stone.

"Why did you, Sir, who know such things so well,
And teach us good, permit them to rebel?
Had you o'erawed and check'd them when in sight,
They would not then have ventured upon flight—
Had you!"—"Out, serpent! did not you begin?
What! introduce, and then upbraid the sin?
For sin it is, as I too well perceive:
But leave me, woman, to reflection leave;
Then to your closet fly, and on your knees
Beg for forgiveness for such sins as these."

"A moody morning!" with a careless air
Replied the wife—"Why counsel me to prayer?
I think the lord and teacher of a school
Should pray himself, and keep his temper cool."

Calm grew the husband when the wife was gone—
"The game," said he, "is never lost till won:
'Tis true, the rebels fly their proper home,
They come not nigh, because they fear to come;
And for my purpose fear will doubtless prove
Of more importance and effect than love;—
Suppose me there—suppose the carriage stops,
Down on her knees my trembling daughter drops
Slowly I raise her, in my arms to fall,
And call for mercy as she used to call;
And shall that boy, who dreaded to appear
Before me, cast away at once his fear?
'Tis not in nature! He who once would cower
Beneath my frown, and sob for half an hour:
He would kneel with motion prompt and quick
If I but look'd—as dogs that do a trick:
He still his knee-joints flexible must feel,
And have a slavish promptitude to kneel;—
Soon as he sees me he will drop his lip,
And bend like one made ready for the whip:
O! come, I trifle, let me haste away—
What! throw it up, when I have cards to play?"

The Doctor went, a self-invited guest;
He met his pupil, and his frown repress'd,
For in those lowering looks he could discern
Resistance sullen and defiance stern;
Yet was it painful to put off his style
Of awful distance, and assume a smile:
So between these, the gracious and the grand,
Succeeded nothing that the Doctor plann'd.
The sullen youth, with some reviving dread,
Bow'd and then hang'd disconsolate his head;
And, muttering welcome in a muffled tone,
Stalk'd cross the park to meditate alone,
Saying, or rather seeming to have said,
"Go! seek your daughter, and be there obey'd."

He went—The daughter her distresses told,
But found her father to her interests cold:
He kindness and complacency advised;
She answer'd, "these were sure to be despised
That of the love her husband once possess'd
Not the least spark was living in his breast;
The boy repented, and grew savage soon;
There never shone for her a honey moon.
Soon as he came, his cares all fix'd on one,
Himself, and all his passion was a gun;
And though he shot as he did all beside,
It still remain'd his only joy and pride:
He left her there,—she knew not where he went,—
But knew full well he should the slight repent;
She was not one his daily taunts to bear,
He made the house a hell that he should share;
For, till he gave her power here—to please,
Never for him should be a moment's ease."

"He loves you, child!" the softening father cried:
—"He loves himself, and not a soul beside:
Loves me!—why, yes, and so he did the peers
You caught him stealing—would he had the fears!
Would you could make him tremble for his life,
And then to you return the stolen wife,
Richly endow'd—but, O! the idiot knows
The worth of every penny he bestows."
"Were he but fool alone, I'd find a way
To govern him, at least to have my day;
Or were he only brute, I'd watch the hour,
And make the brute-affection yield me power;
But silly both and savage—O! my heart!
It is too great a trial!—we must part."

"Oblige the savage by some act!"—"The debt,
You find, the fool will instantly forget;
Oblige the fool with kindness or with praise,
And you the passions of the savage raise."
"Time will do much."—"Can time my name restore?"
"Have patience, child."—"I am a child no more,
Nor more dependent; but, at woman's age,
I feel that wrongs provoke me and enrage:
Sir, could you bring me comfort, I were cool;
But keep your counsel for your boys at school."

The Doctor then departed—Why remain
To hear complaints, who could himself complain,
Who felt his actions wrong, and knew his efforts vain?
The sullen youth, contending with his fate,
Began the darling of his heart to hate;
Her pretty looks, her auburn-braid, her face,
All now remain'd the proofs of his disgrace;
While, more than hateful in his vixen's eyes,
He saw her comforts from his grief arise;
Who felt a joy she strove not to conceal,
When their expenses made her miser feel.

War was perpetual: on a first attack
She gain'd advantage, he would turn his back;
And when her small shot whistled in his ears,
He felt a portion of his early fears;
But if he turn'd him in the battle's heat,
And fought in earnest, hers was then defeat;
His strength of oath and curse brought little harm,
But there was no resisting strength of arm.
Yet wearied both with war, and vex'd at heart,
The slaves of passion judg'd it best to part:

Long they debated, nor could fix a rate
For a man's peace with his contending mate;
But mutual hatred, scorn, and fear, assign'd
That price—that peace it was not theirs to find.
The watchful husband lived in constant hope
To hear the wife had ventured to elope;
But though not virtuous, nor in much discreet,
He found her coldness would such views defeat;
And thus, by self-reproof and avarice scourged,
He wore the galling chains his folly forged.

The wife her pleasures, few and humble, sought,
And with anticipated stipend bought;
Without a home, at fashion's call she fled
To a hired lodging and a widow'd bed;
Husband and parents banish'd from her mind,
She seeks for pleasures that she cannot find;
And grieves that so much treachery was employ'd
To gain a man who has her peace destroy'd.

Yet more the grieving father feels distress,
His error greater, and his motives less;
He finds too late, by stooping to deceit,
It is ourselves and not the world we cheat;
For, though we blind it, yet we can but feel
That we have something evil to conceal;
Nor can we by our utmost care be sure
That we can hide the sufferings we endure.

BOOK XVI.

LADY BARBARA; OR, THE GHOST.

Introductory Discourse—For what Purpose would a Ghost appear?—How the Purpose would be answered—The Fact admitted, would not Doubts return?—Family Stories of Apparitions—Story of Lady Barbara—Her Widowhood—Resides with a Priest—His Family—A favourite Boy—His Education—His Fondness for the Lady—It becomes Love—His Reflections—His Declaration—Her Reply—Her Relation—Why she must not marry a second Time—How learned—Tokens of the Appearance—The Lover argues with the Lady—His Success—The consequences of it.

THE Brothers spoke of Ghosts,—a favourite theme
With those who love to reason or to dream;
And they, as greater men were wont to do,
Felt strong desire to think the stories true;
Stories of spirits freed, who came to prove
To spirits bound in flesh that yet they love,
To give them notice of the things below,
Which we must wonder how they came to know,
Or known, would think of coming to relate
To creatures who are tried by unknown fate.

"Warning," said Richard, "seems the only thing
That would a spirit on an errand bring;
To turn a guilty mind from wrong to right
A ghost might come, at least I think it might."

"But," said the Brother, "if we here are tried,
A spirit sent would put that law aside;
It gives to some advantage others need,
Or hurts the sinner should it not succeed:
If from the dead, said Dives, one were sent
To warn my brethren, sure they would repent;
But Abraham answer'd, if they now reject
The guides they have, no more would that effect;
Their doubts too obstinate for grace would prove,
For wonder hardens hearts it fails to move."

"Suppose a sinner in an hour of gloom,
And let a ghost with all its horrors come;
From lips unmoved let solemn accents flow,
Solemn his gesture be, his motion slow;
Let the waved hand and threatening look impart
Truth to the mind and terror to the heart;
And, when the form is fading to the view,
Let the convicted man cry, 'this is true!'"

"Alas! how soon would doubts again invade
The willing mind, and sins again persuade
I saw it—What?—I was awake, but how?
Not as I am, or I should see it now:
It spoke, I think,—I thought, at least, it spoke,—
And look'd alarming—yes, I felt the look."

"But then in sleep those horrid forms arise,
That the soul sees,—and, we suppose, the eyes,—
And the soul hears,—the senses then thrown by,
She is herself the ear, herself the eye;
A mistress so will free the servile race
For their own tasks, and take herself the place:
In sleep what forms will ductile fancy take,
And what so common as to dream awake?
On others thus do ghostly guests intrude?
Or why am I by such advice pursued?
One out of millions who exist, and why
They know not—cannot know—and such am I;
And shall two beings of two worlds, to meet,
The laws of one, perhaps of both, defeat?
It cannot be—But if some being lives
Who such kind warning to a favourite gives,
Let him these doubts from my dull spirit clear,
And once again, expected guest! appear."

"And if a second time the power complied,
Why is a third, and why a fourth denied?
Why not a warning ghost for ever at our side?
Ah, foolish being! thou hast truth enough,
Augmented guilt would rise on greater proof;
Blind and imperious passion disbelieves,
Or madly scorns the warning it receives."

Or looks for pardon ere the ill be done,
Because 'tis vain to strive our fate to shun;
In spite of ghosts, predestined woes would come,
And warning add new terrors to our doom.

"Yet there are tales that would remove our doubt,
The whisper'd tales that circulate about,
That in some noble mansion take their rise,
And told with secrecy and awe, surprise:
It seems not likely people should advance,
For falsehood's sake, such train of circumstance;
Then the ghosts bear them with a ghost-like grace,
That suits the person, character, and place.

"But let us something of the kind recite:
What think you, now, of Lady Barbara's spright?"

"I know not what to think; but I have heard
A ghost, to warn her or advise, appear'd;
And that she sought a friend before she died
To whom she might the awful fact confide,
Who seal'd and secret should the story keep
Till Lady Barbara slept her final sleep,
In that close bed, that never spirit shakes,
Nor ghostly visitor the sleeper wakes.

"Yes I can give that story, not so well
As your old woman would the legend tell,
But as the facts are stated; and now hear
How ghosts advise, and widows persevere."

When her lord died, who had so kind a heart,
That any woman would have grieved to part,
It had such influence on his widow's mind,
That she the pleasures of the world resign'd;
Young as she was, and from the busy town
Came to the quiet of a village down;
Not as insensible to joys, but still
With a subdued but half-rebellious will
For she had passions warm, and feeling strong,
With a right mind, that dreaded to be wrong;—
Yet she had wealth to tie her to the place
Where it procures delight and veils disgrace;
Yet she had beauty to engage the eye,
A widow still in her minority;

Yet she had merit worthy men to gain,
And yet her hand no merit could obtain;
For, though secluded, there were trials made,
When he who soften'd most could not persuade;
Awhile she hearken'd as her swain proposed,
And then his suit with strong refusal closed.

"Thanks, and farewell!—give credit to my word,
That I shall die the widow of my lord;
'Tis my own will, I now prefer the state,—
If mine should change, it is the will of fate."

Such things were spoken, and the hearers cried,
"Tis very strange,—perhaps she may be tried."

The lady past her time in taking air,
In working, reading, charities, and prayer;
In the last duties she received the aid
Of an old friend, a priest, with whom she pray'd;
And to his mansion with a purpose went,
That there should life be innocently spent;
Yet no cold votress of the cloister she,
Warm her devotion, warm her charity;
The face the index of a feeling mind,
And her whole conduct rational and kind.

Though rich and noble, she was pleased to slide
Into the habits of her reverend guide,
And so attended to his girls and boys,
She seem'd a mother in her fears and joys;
On her they look'd with fondness, something check'd
By her appearance, that engaged respect;
For still she dress'd as one of higher race,
And her sweet smiles had dignity and grace.

George was her favourite, and it gave her joy
To indulge and to instruct the darling boy;
To watch, to soothe, to check the forward child,
Who was at once affectionate and wild;
Happy and grateful for her tender care,
And pleased her thoughts and company to share.

George was a boy with spirit strong and high,
With handsome face and penetrating eye;
O'er his broad forehead hung his locks of brown,
That gave a spirit to his boyish frown;
"My little man," were words that she applied
To him, and he received with growing pride;
Her darling even from his infant years
Had something touching in his smiles and tears
And in his boyish manners he began
To show the pride that was not made for man;

But it became the child, the mother cried,
And the kind lady said it was not pride.
George, to his cost, though sometimes to his praise,
Was quite a hero in these early days,
And would return from heroes just as stout,
Blood in his crimson cheek and blood without.

"What! he submit to vulgar boys and law,
He bear an insult, he forget a blow!
They call'd him parson—let his father bear
His own reproach, it was his proper care;
He was no parson, but he still would teach
The boys their manners, and yet would not preach."

The father, thoughtful of the time foregone,
Was loath to damp the spirit of his son;

Rememb'ring he himself had early laurels won;
The mother frighten'd, begg'd him to refrain,
And not his credit or his linen stain;
While the kind friend so gently blamed the deed,
He smiled in tears, and wish'd her to proceed;
For the boy pleased her, and that requish eye
And daring look were cause of many a sigh,
When she had thought how much would such quick temper
And oft she felt a kind of gathering gloom,
Sad, and prophetic of the ills to come.

Years fled unmark'd; the lady taught no more
Th' adopted tribe as she was wont before;
But by her help the school the lasses sought,
And by the vicar's self the boy was taught;
Not unresisting when that cursed Greek
Ask'd so much time for words that none will speak.

"What can men worse for mortal brain contrive
Than thus a hard dead language to revive
Heav'n's, in a language once so fairly dead,
Let it be buried, not preserved and read;
The bane of every boy to decent station bred;
If any good these crabbed books contain,
Translate them well, and let them then remain;
To one huge vault convey the useless store,
Then lose the key, and never find it more."

Something like this the lively boy express'd,
When Homer was his torment and his guest.

"George," said the father, "can at pleasure seize
The point he wishes, and with too much ease;
And hence, depending on his powers and vain,
He wastes the time that he will sigh to gain."

The partial widow thought the wasted days
He would recover, urged by love and praise;
And thus absolved, the boy, with grateful mind,
Repaid a love so useful and so blind;
Her angry words he loved, although he fear'd,
And words not angry doubly kind appear'd.

George, then on manhood verging, felt the charms
Of war, and kindled at the world's alarms;
Yet war was then, though spreading wide and far,
A state of peace to what has since been war;
'Twas then some dubious claim at sea or land,
That placed a weapon in a warrior's hand;
But in these times the causes of our strife
Are hearth and altar, liberty and life.

George, when from college he return'd, and heard
His father's questions, cool and shy appear'd.

"Who had the honours?"—"Honour!" said the youth,
"Honour at college—very good, in truth!"

"What hours to study did he give?"—"He gave
Enough to feel they made him like a slave—
In fact, the vicar found if George should rise
'Twas not by college rules and exercise.

"At least the time for your degree abide,
And be ordain'd," the man of peace replied;
Then you may come and aid me while I keep,
And watch, and shear th' hereditary sheep;
Choose then your spouse."—"That heard the youth, and
Nor to aught else attended or replied.

George had of late indulged unusual fears
And dangerous hopes; he wept unconscious tears;—
Whether for camp or college, well he knew
He must at present bid his friends adieu;
His father, mother, sisters, could he part
With these, and feel no sorrow at his heart?

But from that lovely lady could he go?
That fonder, fairer, dearer mother?—"No!"
For while his father spoke, he fix'd his eyes
On that dear face, and felt a warmth arise,
A trembling flush of joy, that he could ill disguise—
Then ask'd himself from whence this growing bliss,
This new-found joy, and all that waits on this?
Why sinks that voice so sweetly in mine ear?
What makes it now a livelier joy to hear?
Why gives that touch—Still, still do I retain
The fierce delight that tingled through each vein—
Why at her presence with such quickness flows
The vital current?—"Well a lover knows.

O! tell me not of years,—can she be old?
Those eyes, those lips, can man unmoved behold?
Has time that bosom child's? are cheeks so rosy cold?
No, she is young, or I her love I engage
Will grow discreet, and that will seem like age;
But speak it not; Death's equalizing arm
Levels not surer than Love's stronger charm,
That bids all inequalities be gone,
That laughs at rank, that mocks comparison.

There is not young or old, if Love decrees,
He levels orders, he confounds degrees;
There is not fair, or dark, or short, or tall,
Or grave, or sprightly—Love reduces all;
He makes unite the pensive and the gay,
Gives something here, takes something there away;
From each abundant good a portion takes,
And for each want a compensation makes;
Then tell me not of years—Love, power divine,
Takes, as he wills, from hers, and gives to mine.

And she, in truth, was lovely—Time had strewn
No snows on her, though he so long had flown;
The purest damask blossom'd in her cheek,
The eyes said all that eyes are wont to speak;

Her pleasing person she with care adorn'd,
Nor arts that stay the flying graces scorn'd
Nor held it wrong these graces to renew,
Or give the fading rose its opening hue;
Yet few there were who needed less the art
To hide an error, or a grace impart.

George, yet a child, her faultless form admired,
And call'd his fondness love, as truth required;
But now, when conscious of the secret flame,
His bosom's pain, he dared not give the name;
In her the mother's milder passion grew,
Tender she was, but she was placid too;
From him the mild and filial love was gone,
And a strong passion came in triumph on.

"Will she," he cried, "this impious love allow?
And once my mother, be my mistress now?
The parent-spouse? how far the thought from her,
And how can I the daring wish aver?
When first I speak it, how will those dear eyes
Gleam with awaken'd horror and surprise;
Will she not, angry and indignant, fly
From my imploring call, and bid me die?
Will she not shudder at the thought, and say,
My son! and lift her eyes to heaven, and pray?
Alas! I fear—and yet my soul she won
While she with fond endearments call'd me son!
Then first I felt—yet knew that I was wrong—
This hope, at once so guilty and so strong:
She gave—I feel it now—a mother's kiss,
And quickly fancy took a bolder bliss;
But hid the burning blush, for fear that eye
Should see the transport, and the bliss deny:
O! when she knows the purpose I conceal,
When my fond wishes to her bosom steal,
How will the angel fear? How will the woman feel?"

"And yet perhaps this instant, while I speak,
She knows the pain I feel, the cure I seek;
Better than I she may my feelings know,
And nurse the passion that she dares not show:
She reads the look—and sure my eyes have shown
To her the power and triumph of her own,—
And in maternal love she veils the flame
That she will heal with joy, yet hear with shame.

"Come, let me then—no more a son—reveal
The daring hope, and for her favour kneel;
Let me in ardent speech my meanings dress,
And, while I mourn the fault, my love confess;
And, once confess'd, no more that hope resign,
For she or misery henceforth must be mine.
"O! what confusion shall I see advance
On that dear face, responsive to my glance!
Sure she can love!"

In fact, the youth was right;
She could, but love was dreadful in her sight;
Love like a spectre in her view appear'd,
The nearer he approach'd the more she fear'd.
But knew she, then, this dreaded love? She guess'd
That he had guilt—she knew he had not rest:
She saw a fear that she could ill define,
And nameless terrors in his looks combine;
It is a state that cannot long endure,
And yet both parties dreaded to be sure.

All views were past of priesthood and a gown,
George, fix'd on glory, now prepared for town;
But first this mighty hazard must be run,
And more than glory either lost or won:
Yet, what was glory? Could he win that heart
And gain that hand, what cause was there to part?
Her love afforded all that life affords—
Honour and fame were phantasies and words.

But he must see her—She alone was seen
In the still evening of a day serene:
In the deep shade beyond the garden walk
They met, and talking, ceased and fear'd to talk;
At length she spoke of parent's love,—and now
He hazards all—"No parent, lady, thou!
None, none to me! but looks so fond and mild
Would well become the parent of my child."

She gasp'd for breath—then sat as one resolved
On some high act, and then the means resolved.

"It cannot be, my George, my child, my son!
The thought is misery!—Guilt and misery shun:
Far from us both be such design, O, far!
Let it not pain us at the awful bar,
Where souls are tried, where known the mother's part
That I sustain, and all of either heart.

"To wed with thee I must all shame efface,
And part with female dignity and grace:
Was I not told, by one who knew so well
This rebel heart, that it must not rebel?
Were I not warn'd, yet Reason's voice would cry,
Retreat, resolve, and from the danger fly!
If Reason spoke not, yet would woman's pride—
A woman will by better counsel guide;
And should both Pride and Prudence plead in vain,
There is a warning that must still remain,
And, though the heart rebell'd, would ever cry 'Refrain.'"
He heard, he grieved—so check'd, the eager youth
Dared not again repeat th' offensive truth,
But stopp'd and fix'd on that loved face an eye
Of pleading passion, trembling to reply

And that reply was hurried, was express'd
With bursts of sorrow from a troubled breast;
He could not yet forbear the tender suit,
And dare not speak—his eloquence was mute.
But this not long, again the passion rose
In him, in her the spirit to oppose:
Yet was she firm; and he, who fear'd the calm
Of resolution, purposed to alarm,
And make her dread a passion strong and wild—
He fear'd her firmness while her looks were mild:
Therefore he strongly, warmly urged his prayer,
Till she, less patient, urged him to forbear.
"I tell thee, George, as I have told before,
I feel a mother's love, and feel no more;
A child I bore thee in my arms, and how
Could I—did prudence yield—receive thee now?"

At her remonstrance hope revived, for oft
He found her words severe, her accents soft;
In eyes that threaten'd tears of pity stood,
And truth she made as gracious as she could:—
But, when she found the dangerous youth would seek
His peace alone, and still his wishes speak,
Fearful she grew, that, opening thus his heart,
He might to hers a dangerous warmth impart:
All her objections slight to him appear'd,—
But one she had, and now it must be heard.

"Yes, it must be! and he shall understand
What powers, that are not of the world, command;
So shall he cease, and I in peace shall live!"

Sighing she spoke—"that widowhood can give!"
Then to her lover turn'd, and gravely said,
"Let due attention to my words be paid:
Meet me to-morrow, and resolve I obey;"
Then named the hour and place, and went her way.

Before that hour, or moved by spirit vain
Of woman's wish to triumph and complain;
She had his parents summon'd, and had shown
Their son's strong wishes, nor conceal'd her own:
"And do you give," she said, "a parent's aid
To make the youth of his strange love afraid;
And, be it sin or not, be all the shame display'd."
The good old Pastor wonder'd, seem'd to grieve,
And look'd suspicious on this child of Eve:
He judg'd his boy, though wild, had never dared
To talk of love, had not rebuke been spared;
But he replied, in mild and tender tone,
"It is not sin, and therefore shame has none."

The different ages of the pair he knew,
And quite as well their different fortunes too:
A meek just man; but difference in his sight
That made the match unequal made it right:
"His son, his friend united, and become
Of his own heart—the comforts of his home—
Was it so wrong? Perhaps it was her pride
That felt the distance, and the youth denied?"

The blushing widow heard, and she retired,
Musing on what her ancient friend desired;
She could not, therefore, to the youth complain,
That his good father wish'd him to refrain;
She could not add, your parents, George, obey,
They will your absence—no such will had they.

Now, in th' appointed minute met the pair,
Foredoom'd to meet: George made the lover's prayer,
That was heard kindly; then the lady tried
For a calm spirit, felt it, and replied.

"George, that I love thee why should I suppress?
For 'tis a love that virtue may profess—
Parental,—frown not,—tender, fix'd, sincere;
Thou art for dearer ties by much too dear,
And nearer must not be, thou art so very near:
Nay, does not reason, prudence, pride agree,
Our very feelings, that it must not be?
Nay, look not so, I shun the task no more,
But will to thee thy better self restore.

"Then hear, and hope not; to the tale I tell
Attend! obey me, and let all be well:
Love is forbade to me, and thou wilt find
All thy too ardent views must be resign'd;
Then from thy bosom all such thoughts remove,
And spare the curse of interdicted love.

"If doubts at first assail thee, wait awhile,
Nor mock my sadness with satiric smile;
For, if not much of other worlds we know,
Nor how a spirit speaks in this below,
Still there is speech and intercourse; and now
The truth of what I tell I first avow,
True will I be in all, and be attentive thou.

"I was a Ratcliffe, taught and train'd to live
In all the pride that ancestry can give;
My only brother, when our mother died,
Fill'd the dear offices of friend and guide;
My father early taught us all he dared,
And for his bolder flights our minds prepared:
He read the works of deists, every book
From crabbed Hobbes to courtly Bolingbroke;
And when we understood not, he would cry,
Let the expressions in your memory lie,
The light will soon break in, and you will find
Rest for your spirits, and be strong of mind!"

"Alas! however strong, however weak,
The rest was something we had still to seek!"

"He taught us duties of no arduous kind,
The easy morals of the doubtful mind;
He bade us all our childish fears control,
And drive the nurse and grandam from the soul;
Told us the word of God was all we saw,
And that the law of nature was his law;
This law of nature we might find abstruse,
But gain sufficient for our common use.

"Thus, by persuasion, we our duties learn'd,
And were but little in the cause concern'd.

"We lived in peace, in intellectual ease,
And thought that virtue was the way to please,
And pure morality the keeping free
From all the stains of vulgar villany.

"But Richard, dear enthusiast! shunn'd reproach,
He let no stain upon his name encroach;
But fled the hated vice, was kind and just,
That all must love him, and that all might trust.

"Free, sad discourse was ours; we often sigh'd
To think we could not in some truths confide:
Our father's final words gave no content,
We found not what his self-reliance meant:
To fix our faith some grave relations sought,
Doctrines and creeds of various kinds they brought,
And we as children heard what they as doctors taught.

"Some to the priest refer'd us, in whose book
No unbeliever could resist long;
Others to some great preachers, who could tame
The fiercest mind, and set the cold on flame;
For him no rival in dispute was found
Whom he could not confute or not confound.
Some mystics told us of the sign and seal,
And what the spirit would in time reveal,
If we had grace to wait, if we had hearts to feel:
Others, to reason trusting, said, believe
As she directs, and what she proves receive;
While many told us, it is all but guess,
Stick to your church, and calmly acquiesce.

"Thus, doubting, wearied, hurried, and perplex'd,
This world was lost in thinking of the next:
When spoke my brother—From my soul I hate
This clash of thought, this ever doubting state;
For ever seeking certainty, yet blind
In our research, and puzzled when we find.

"Could not some spirit, in its kindness, steal
Back to our world, and some dear truth reveal?
Say there is danger,—if it could be done,
Sure one would venture—I would be the one;
And when a spirit—much as spirits might—
I would to thee communicate my light!"

"I sought my daring brother to oppose,
But awful gladness in my bosom rose:
I fear'd my wishes; but through all my frame
A bold and elevating terror came:
Yet with dissembling prudence I replied,
'Know we the laws that may be thus defied?
Should the free spirit to th' embodied tell
The precious secret, would it not rebel?
Yet while I spoke I felt a pleasing glow
Suffuse my cheek at what I long'd to know;
And I, like Eve transgressing, grew more bold,
And wish'd to hear a spirit and behold.

"I have no friend," said he, "to not one man
Can I appear; but, love! to thee I came:
Who first shall die?—I wept, but—'I agree
To all thou say'st, dear Richard! and would be
The first to wing my way, and bring my news to thee.'

"Long we conversed, but not till we perceived
A gathering gloom—Our freedom gain'd, we grieved;
Above the vulgar, as we judg'd, in mind,
Below in peace, more sad as more refined;
'Twas joy, 'twas sin—Offenders at the time,
We felt the hurried pleasure of our crime
With pain that crime creates, and this in both—
Our mind united as the strongest oath.
O, my dear George, in ceasing to obey,
Misery and trouble meet us in our way!
I felt as one intruding in a scene
Where none should be, where none had ever been;
Like our first parent, I was new to sin,
But plainly felt its sufferings begin:
In nightly dreams I walk'd on soil unsound,
And in my day-dreams endless error found.

"With this dear brother I was doom'd to part,
Who, with a husband, shared a troubled heart:
My Lord I honour'd; but I never proved
The madd'ning joy, the boast of some who loved:
It was a marriage that our friends profess'd
Would be most happy, and I acquiesced;
And we were happy, for our love was calm,
Not life's delicious essence, but its balm.

"My brother left us,—dear, unhappy boy!
He never seem'd to taste of earthly joy,
Never to live on earth, but ever strove
To gain some tidings of a world above.

"Parted from him, I found no more to please,
Ease was my object, and I dwell in ease;
And thus in quiet, not perhaps content,
A year in wedlock, lingering time! was spent.

"One night I slept not, but I courted sleep,
And forced my thoughts on tracks they could not keep;
Till nature, wearied in the strife, repos'd,
And deep forgetfulness my wanderings closed.

"My lord was absent—distant from the bed
A pendent lamp its softest lustre shed;
But there was light that chased away the gloom,
And brought to view each object in the room:
These I observed ere yet I sunk in sleep,
That, if disturb'd not, had been long and deep.

"I was awaken'd by some being nigh,
It seem'd some voice, and gave a timid cry,—
When sounds, that I describe not, slowly broke
On my attention—'Be composed, and look!'—
I strove, and I succeeded; look'd with awe,
But yet with firmness, and my brother saw.

"George, why that smile?—By all that God has done,
By the great spirit, by the blessed Son,
By the one holy Three, by the three holy One,
I saw my brother,—saw him by my bed,
And every doubt in full conviction fled!—
It was his own mild spirit—He awhile
Waited my calmness with benignant smile;
So softly shines the veiled sun, till past
The cloud, and light upon the world is cast:
That look composed and soften'd I survey'd,
And met the glance fraternal less afraid;
Though in those looks was something of command,
And traits of what I fear'd to understand.

"Then spoke the spirit—George, I pray, attend—
First, let all doubts of thy religion end—
The word reveal'd is true: inquire no more,
Believe in meekness, and with thanks adore:

"Thy priest attend, but not in all rely,
And to objectors seek for no reply:
Truth, doubt, and error, will be mix'd below—
Be thou content the greater truths to know,
And in obedience rest thee—For thy life
Thou needest counsel—now a happy wife,
A widow soon! and then, my sister, then
Think not of marriage, think no more of men—
Life will have comforts; thou wilt much enjoy
Of moderate good, then do not this destroy!
Fear much, and wed no more; by passion led,
Shouldst thou again—Art thou attending?—wed,
Care in thy ways will grow, and anguish haunt thy bed:
A brother's warning on thy heart engrave:
Thou art a mistress—then be not a slave!
Shouldst thou again that hand in fondness give,
What life of misery art thou doom'd to live!
How wilt thou weep, lament, implore, complain!
How wilt thou meet derision and disdain!"

"And pray to heaven in doubt, and kneel to man in vain!
Thou read'st of woes to tender bosoms sent—
Thine shall with tenfold agony be rent;
Increase of anguish shall new years bestow,
Pain shall on thought and grief on reason grow,
And this th' advice I give increase the ill I show."

"A second marriage!—No!—by all that's dear!
I cried aloud—The spirit bade me hear."

"There will be trial,—how I must not say,
Perhaps I cannot—listen, and obey!—
Free is thy will—th' event I cannot see,
Distinctly cannot, but thy will is free:
Come, weep not, sister—spirits can but guess,
And not ordain—but do not wed distress;
For who would rashly venture on a snare?"

"I swear!" I answered.—"No, thou must not swear,"
He said, or I had sworn; but still the vow
Was past, was in my mind, and there is now:
Never! O, never!—Why that sullen air?
Think'st thou—ungenerous!—I would wed despair?"

"Was it not told me thus?—and then I cried,
'Art thou in bliss?—but nothing he replied,
Save of my fate, for that he came to show,
Nor of aught else permitted me to know."

"Forewarn'd, forewarn'd thee, and thy way pursue,
Safe, if thou wilt, not flow'ry—now, adieu!"

"Nay, go not thus," I cried, "for this will seem
The work of sleep, a mere impressive dream;
Give me some token, that I may indeed
From the suggestions of my doubts be freed!"

"Be this a token—ere the week be fled
Shall tidings greet thee from the newly dead."
Nay, but, I said, with courage not my own,
'O! be some signal of thy presence shown;
Let not this visit with the rising day
Pass, and be melted like a dream away."

"O, woman! woman! ever anxious still
To gain the knowledge, not to curb the will!
Have I not promised?—Child of sin, attend—
Make not a lying spirit of thy friend:
Give me thy hand!—I gave it, for my soul
Was now grown ardent, and above control;

Eager I stretch'd it forth, and felt the hold
Of shadowy fingers, more than icy cold:
A nameless pressure on my wrist was made,
And instant vanish'd the beloved shade!
Strange it will seem, but ere the morning came,
I slept, nor felt disorder in my frame:

Then came a dream—I saw my father's shade,
But not with awe like that my brother's made;